



## Disability History and Awareness Month 2023

### Frank Stephens

Today's activist, Frank Stephens, made it his life's work to spread the joys of life with a disability.

Originally from Fairfax, Virginia, Frank Stephens is a lifelong advocate for people with disabilities, specifically Down syndrome. Stephens initially gained national attention in 2012 after writing an open letter to comedian Ann Coulter following her use of disability slurs when discussing then-President Barack Obama. He later received the Quincy Jones Exceptional Advocacy Award from the Global Down Syndrome Foundation in 2016 for his advocacy efforts.



Stephens is perhaps best known for his testimony before congress on behalf of the Global Down Syndrome Foundation, where he gave an impassioned plea for further funding and research efforts for down syndrome. He also highlighted the discriminatory termination of fetuses believed to have down syndrome. In his testimony, he famously said, "If you take one thing away from today, I want you to know that I am a man with Down syndrome, and my life is worth living." He received a standing ovation for his speech which has since gone viral on multiple media platforms.

In addition to his continued work as an ambassador for the Global Down Syndrome Foundation, Stephens has acted in several plays and a handful of feature-length films. He is also a Special Olympian athlete specializing in equestrian events and sits on the Special Olympics board for the state of Virginia. Stephens' life work advocating for people with Down Syndrome and disabilities broadly, like many others in this floor letter, highlights the importance of people with disabilities in society.

Profiles by Andrew Caruana, Policy and Research Intern, Office of Senator Sara Gelser Blouin

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