



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT**

**PROCLAMATION
“DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH, MARCH 2023”**

WHEREAS, disability is a natural part of the human experience and does not diminish the right of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society and participate fully in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of our Territory; and

WHEREAS, the theme, “**Moving Towards Change,**” is a territory-wide commitment towards the inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, words have power. The word ‘special or special needs,’ ‘handicap,’ and ‘mental retardation or retarded’ and Samoan terms such as e le atoatoa or manaoga faapitoa are inappropriate terms that lead to harmful action, discrimination, abuse, negative stereotypes, and violence. The terms must be eliminated from being used. The official Samoan translation of disability is a’afiaga tumau. Recognizing the person first before the disability will change our perspective on opportunities for all. *American Samoa will move towards maintaining each individual’s dignity and respect by emphasizing the person, instead of the disability.*

WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life, employment, education, telecommunication, transportation, and public and private places. *American Samoa will move towards inclusive planning to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities in all aspects of life.*

WHEREAS, digital equity refers to the access and effective use of technology for all residents to participate in modern society. The expanded use of telehealth capabilities provides related services to students with disabilities in the classroom. *American Samoa’s commitment to transform broadband services promotes digital inclusion for children and access to healthcare for all.*

WHEREAS, broadcast communication such as radio, television, social media, and emergency alerts limits persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who are blind and low vision from participating fully in our community. *Public and private sectors must deploy new technologies to transform and improve access of information and communication technology for all.*

WHEREAS, it is the commitment of the American Samoa Government to provide people with disabilities the opportunity to pursue meaningful and productive lives and thrive in a fully inclusive society.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, LEMANU P. S. MAUGA, Governor of the Territory of American Samoa, do hereby proclaim the month of March 2023 as Developmental Disability Awareness Month in the Territory of American Samoa, and call upon our people to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto affixed my signature and the seal of my office on this 1st day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-three.


LEMANU P.S. MAUGA
Governor