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LAW, POLICY, AND ADVOCACY

PROUD ASPY MOM • MAY 2026

Happy Mother's Day



Celebrate Every Win

I cannot believe we are this far into the new year. It seems like it was just a few weeks ago when we found out our daughter was going to Spelman as a Guest Exchange Student. We were elated yet anxious about the road ahead.

Would she acclimate to a new environment?

Would her peers treat her with kindness?

How would she handle a strong, gender-specific cultural space?

How would she handle an emergency?

As I reflect now, six months later, I am grateful for every win. College is complicated for most young adults. Navigating college for persons on the spectrum created additional soft obstacles that are hard to quantify.

“In college, the support paradigm shifts dramatically. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) no longer applies, and instead, students must navigate the less comprehensive protections offered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This means:

- Students must self-identify and self-advocate*
- Accommodations must be specifically requested rather than automatically provided*
- Parents have significantly less access to educational information and reduced ability to advocate directly*
- Support services vary widely between institutions”*

SOURCE: KIDSCLUB ABA ›

I know that our family is blessed and we are grateful. We celebrate every win because we are cognizant of the journey.



Self-Care

Many mothers feel guilty when they take time for themselves, but as the saying goes, we are only human. In a society with too many overachievers, we do not spend enough time attending to our human needs.

It sounds simple, but the act of taking a nap, reading a book, going for a walk, or spending time with friends is important for our self-care. The more we ignore these needs, the harder it is to do our best for others.

“Making time for yourself is critical. As the adage goes, you cannot pour from an empty cup. Unfortunately, many parents of children with special needs do consistently pour from an empty cup... As a parent of a child with special needs, ‘me time’ is likely minimal; however, it’s necessary to find even small moments of alone time. Take some time to think about what truly makes you happy—outside of being a parent. What brings you joy? What activities, however small, can you engage in to reduce your stress levels and prevent burnout?”

As a mother of a child on the spectrum, I too work hard to carve out quality time with myself. However, I understand that if I do not take the time, I cannot meaningfully care for my children. **Take the time!**

Educate Yourself

Life is about choices. Sometimes we jump in feet first, eyes closed, and we hope for the best. Other times we make calculated decisions and educate ourselves.

If you are a family member, parent, or loved one who cares for a person with a disability, please refer to the [Agency for Persons with Disabilities \(APD\)](#), and learn about your rights as a Florida citizen. If you meet the service requirement, stay vigilant and advocate for your rights!

“In order to be eligible for services from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), an individual must have a developmental disability (as defined in section 393.063(11), Florida Statutes), which occurs prior to age 18 and constitutes a substantial handicap that can reasonably be expected to continue indefinitely.

Disabilities served by APD include:

- *Intellectual disabilities (Full Scale IQ of 70 or below)*
- *Severe forms of autism*
- *Spina bifida cystica or myelomeningocele*
- *Cerebral palsy*
- *Prader-Willi syndrome*
- *Down syndrome*
- *Phelan-McDermid syndrome*
- *Individuals between the ages of 3–5 at high risk for a developmental disability”*

As a young mother, I did not know the importance of this agency and the impact it has on families who need these services. However, as a mature parent, I am keenly aware of the necessity of services and make every effort to share this resource. **Education is power!**

A Hero Among Us

I had the honor of meeting Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson at a private gathering, just after finishing her book. I was amazed at the parallels of our lives and our different paths.

Justice Brown Jackson is in her 50s, married to her college sweetheart, from Florida, and has an adult daughter on the spectrum. Listening to her is a joy because she is such a gifted communicator. However, after reading her book and hearing her speak, I realize she is also a mom who cares about her daughter, her footprint in this world, and how to make it better. Like so many other mothers, she is an example of overcoming tremendous odds.



See the interview: “Ketanji Brown Jackson opens up about her daughter’s autism diagnosis.”

▶ [WATCH THE CNN INTERVIEW](#)

NEW BEGINNINGS

I recently opened my law firm and consulting practice to help others. Thank you for your continued prayers.

[VISIT KIMBERLYGJACKSON.COM](https://www.kimberlygjackson.com)

With gratitude,

KIMBERLY G. JACKSON

ATTORNEY · ADVOCATE · SPEAKER

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You are receiving this because you are part of the Proud Aspy Mom community.

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