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March 3, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of my whole family, who is in support of the creation of the Arc of Lane County's *The Arc Park*. My daughter Mukti is an eight year-old who experiences Down Syndrome, and she has been a part of the Arc family for almost 3 years now. We are huge fans of the Arc due to their qualified, caring staff, and we have benefitted from their support in so many ways. The creation of *The Arc Park* is yet, another brilliant extension of The Arc's inclusive vision to advocate the rights and well-being of those affected by developmental and intellectual disabilities.

I was fortunate enough to see the outline of plans for this park, as well as a virtual reality tour of its many features. First of all, a park of this nature would bring families like ours together in a significant way, creating a pivotal sense of community and belonging. I can't tell you how many times we rely on our local park as a place to take our daughter where she can release energy or pent-up frustrations due to her inability to verbalize her everyday needs. Sometimes she also just needs to get sensory input to help her self-regulate. We make-due with the parks close to us, but they are quite limited in design, and having a park like *The Arc Park*, that is actually designed with her needs in mind, would be a Godsend.

What so many people also don't realize is that all children deserve the freedom and acceptance to play in spaces that can accommodate their needs and limitations. At parks designed for typically developing children, there are often spaces for climbing that are too narrow. Our daughter usually gets crowded and pushed aside, causing her to freeze and feel intimidated. What I love about *The Arc Park* is its attention to space and its wide walkways. It also has a variety of features, allowing for multiple ways for sensory input. At our local park, we are always having to be on top of situations so that everyone can be safe. *The Arc Park* takes into consideration children who have sensory issues and mobility issues, allowing for safer play. One of my daughter's best friends is in a wheelchair, and *The Arc Park* would be the first park where they would be able to navigate together. Both my husband and I look forward to having a park where our daughter and children like her are the majority, not the minority—where their needs are a priority, not a secondary thought. It may sound selfish, but we would also love to be able to visit a park where *we* can relax, too. Somehow, being in a space that's essentially designed for children who experience special needs lessens the pressure on parents (and children) who may often feel stigmatized by their limitations. An example of this would be the feeling of needing to apologize for a child taking a little longer than others to get down the slide, or in our case, having a daughter who insists on going down the slide head-first. The reality of having a child who experiences special needs is that certain forms of etiquette, though a nice goal, are often delayed or challenging to meet in the presence of others out in the community. Having a special park like *The Arc Park* would offer the kind of adaptive play space where our children can feel safe,

accepted, and relaxed to work through behaviors and limitations in their own time-- and on their own turf.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,
Lesli M. Takasugi
Jeffrey L. Davis