



October 31, 2013

Dear Senators Menendez and Corker:

Access Living is writing in support of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). For more than thirty years, we have been part of the US disability rights movement at the local, state and national levels. Over the years, many of our staff have been involved in international disability rights and exchange programs. Most recently this year we have had guests with disabilities from Tunisia, Colombia, Ecuador and Tajikistan. The power of the CRPD, and the inequalities suffered by people with disabilities around the world, is very real to our staff, community and international friends.

Along with hundreds of our fellow American organizations working in disability issues, veterans issues and the business sector, we strongly believe that the US needs to ratify the CRPD so that we can take our rightful place as leaders at the world table on disability rights. The CRPD embodies equal treatment and non-discrimination in access to rehabilitation, employment and educational opportunities. Access Living staff are right now working on these very issues and want to be able to share what we learn as best practices with the rest of the world.

By ratifying the CRPD, the United States will continue to be a leader in setting the standards for ensuring the human rights of individuals with disabilities. The Convention reflects core American values such as the dignity of the individual, access to justice, the importance of family decision-making and access to appropriate healthcare. These are vital issues in the work of Access Living.

Through ratifying the CRPD and thus entering the roundtable afforded to the countries who have also ratified the CRPD, the United States can provide and influence guidance on the implementation of the treaty around the world. We can lend our expertise as more countries develop their own disability rights laws. Disability knows no borders. Neither should freedom, equality and inclusion.

Access Living's staff members are, and have been for years, personally committed to US leadership on behalf of the more than one billion people with disabilities worldwide. We believe swift US ratification of the CRPD in a bipartisan fashion is in this country's best interest and we thank you for your leadership in calling a hearing on this issue.

If you have further questions, please contact Amber Smock at (312) 640-2191 or asmock@accessliving.org

Sincerely,

Marca Bristo
President and CEO

Amber Smock
Director of Advocacy