



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

October 30, 2013

Honorable Robert Menendez, Committee Chair
Honorable Bob Corker, Ranking Member
Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
446 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Dear Senators Menendez and Corker:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), a coalition of national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations, urges the United States Senate to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This vital nondiscrimination treaty seeks to achieve the same goals as existing disability laws in the United States: to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society.

On July 27, 2010, during the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), CCD members encouraged the Senate to quickly act on the treaty package once submitted by the Administration. We renew this call for swift attention and ratification of the Convention.

With the passage of the landmark ADA in 1990, our nation established itself as a world leader in ensuring the human rights of individuals with disabilities. The ADA was the first major piece of domestic legislation in the world to address the discrimination, legal challenges, and physical and systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. The ADA has served as a beacon to people around the world and a model legislation which other nations have emulated to protect and advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The United States has further led efforts in the education of children with disabilities, beginning in 1975 with the passage of the forerunner legislation to today's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congress took the critical steps in protecting the rights of

citizens with disabilities by enacting in bi-partisan fashion the ADA, IDEA, and other legislation, but the CRPD will further the goal that these protections are guaranteed for United States citizens, corporations, and organizations throughout the world.

The CRPD establishes international standards regarding the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities, and creates a common basis for greater civic and political participation, self-sufficiency, and independent living. 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 health care. The Convention is furthermore consistent with not only the ADA, but also with IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and numerous other U.S. laws.

One hundred and thirty-eight nations as well as the European Union have ratified the CRPD as of October 2013, including important allies of the United States. We hope that the Senate again comes together in bipartisan fashion, as it did in passing the ADA and the more recent Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), to ratify the CRPD and ensure our global leadership in disability and human rights.

The treaty package submitted by the Administration furthers the goal of disability laws in the United States of ensuring the equal rights and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities. The reservations, understandings, and declarations offered by the Administration allow the United States to meet the obligations of the treaty while remaining consistent with U.S. domestic law.

The standards in the CRPD carry moral authority, which lend weight and credibility to efforts in all parts of the world to achieve justice, equality and inclusion for individuals with disabilities. The United States' ratification of the treaty will continue our country's distinguished tradition as a world leader for people with disabilities as evidenced by the ADA. Ratification will allow U.S. participation on the CRPD Conference of States Parties, create U.S. eligibility to serve on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and thus allow the U.S. to provide input into the implementation of the treaty and the development of disability rights. Such participation will not only further our nation's vision for global human rights, but assist the millions of people with disabilities from the United States such as military veterans, students, scientists, tourists and business leaders, and their families who live, do business, and travel abroad. American citizens with disabilities should have the same opportunity to benefit from a world economy that is fully accessible to all people.

We, the undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, are committed to our country's leadership for the rights and empowerment of the 650 million people with disabilities worldwide. We believe the ratification of the CRPD will allow the United States to continue in our global leadership in this area, and therefore urge the Senate to quickly consider and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
American Council of the Blind
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Diabetes Association
American Foundation for the Blind
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Music Therapy Association
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Amputee Coalition of America
APSE - The Network on Employment
Association for Assistive Technology Act Programs
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Attention Deficit Disorder Association
Autism National Committee
Autism Speaks
Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Brain Injury Association of America
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Learning Disabilities
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Family Voices
Goodwill Industries International
Health & Disability Advocates
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association
Institute for Educational Leadership
Lupus Foundation of America
Lutheran Services in America Disability Network
Mental Health America

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability
Directors
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on Aging
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Institute
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Health Law Program
National Industries for the Blind
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
National Organization on Disability
National Respite Coalition
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
School Social Work Association of America
Special Needs Alliance
TASH
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Arc of the United States
The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation
The Jewish Federations of North America
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association (including VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal)
United States International Council on Disabilities
Vietnam Veterans of America
World Institute on Disability

cc: Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Secretary of State John Kerry
Judith Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights