

October 24, 2013

Dear Senator:

East Texas Center for Independent Living (ETCIL) is writing to support ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Our mission is to help people with disabilities achieve greater independence, self-sufficiency, and full participation in their communities.

The CRPD is a non-discrimination treaty seeking to achieve the same goals as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other existing disability laws in United States: to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, inclusion and integration into all aspects of society. The CRPD is important to all people with disabilities, including our veterans and service members with disabilities, as it embodies equal treatment and non-discrimination in access to rehabilitation, employment and educational opportunities.

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, as we have under the ADA, IDEA, etc. 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.

Through these mechanisms, the United States can provide and influence guidance on the implementation of the treaty around the world and lend our expertise as more countries develop their own disability rights laws. Such leadership 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.

ETCIL is committed to US leadership on behalf of the 1 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 ask you for your support and leadership on this issue.

If you have additional questions, please contact me at Imattheis@etcil.org or 903-581-7542.

Sincerely,

Laura Mattheis
Executive Director

