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July 26, 2013

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
528 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Corker
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker:

Human Rights Watch is writing to strongly urge you to vote for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). With adoption of the treaty, the United States would have an important opportunity to strengthen its leadership on the rights of persons with disabilities at home and abroad.

US leadership has been influential in putting disability rights on the international agenda. The landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) inspired disability advocates and individuals with disabilities around the world, and served as a model for foreign countries in drafting their own disability laws. The CRPD itself was inspired by and modeled on the ADA, and the US provided important technical assistance during the convention's negotiation and drafting.

Like the ADA, the CRPD embodies the basic principles of individual dignity and autonomy, non-discrimination, full inclusion and participation in society, equality of opportunity, accessibility, and respect for difference. The legal standards articulated by the CRPD are largely aligned with US disability law. While the ADA remains critically important, ratification of the CRPD would represent a global reaffirmation of US commitment to the values embodied in US

disability legislation and provide a clear legal framework to advance and promote the rights of persons with disabilities around the world.

US ratification is a critical step toward achieving the American vision to empower people with disabilities worldwide to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, full public participation, and inclusion and integration into society. More than 600 American disability organizations, nearly 40 faith-based organizations, and more than 20 veterans services organizations support US ratification of the CRPD. Ratifying the CRPD would also help to protect the rights and facilitate access for US citizens with disabilities and their loved ones who travel, live, or work abroad. Taking this important step would enable the United States to share its experience and actively participate in international efforts aimed at overcoming discrimination, barriers, and challenges faced by people with disabilities.

Without further delay, the United States should ratify the CRPD and join the other 133 countries in protecting the rights of over one billion people with disabilities worldwide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Roth', with a thin black line extending from the top of the signature towards the word 'Sincerely,' above it.

Kenneth Roth
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch