

October 29, 2013

Dear Senator Menendez:

I am writing on behalf of the non-profit Institute on Disability Culture, which is an educational and charitable organization that educates people about disability issues. I write today to encourage you to support ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

I have had a chance to travel internationally as well as throughout the United States and I have yet to encounter a town, transportation venue, or building that is completely accessible to someone with a disability. In the U.S., this is despite over 30 years since the passage and implementation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and 20 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I understand great strides have been made, but I also know we have a long way to go. In classes I teach I am constantly asked questions like why aren't more people with disabilities integrated into the educational and employment systems. Perhaps even more telling I am constantly hearing someone has never met a person with a disability. Since, as you know, we are everywhere, what this means is that they are not aware of meeting someone with a disability and this is in large part because of the stigma that still exists in identifying oneself, as I just did, as a person with a disability.

The CRPD is a non-discrimination treaty seeking to achieve the same goals as the 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 US 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. By not ratifying it, we will do the opposite. By ratifying the CRPD and providing valuable leadership to the world, the US will not only further our nation's vision for global human rights, but assist the millions of people with disabilities from the US 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.

The Institute on Disability Culture 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 disculture@gmail.com or [\(808\) 291-8858](tel:(808)291-8858).

Sincerely,

Steven E. Brown,

Co-Founder, Institute on Disability Culture

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