



October 30, 2013

Dear Senator:

Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC) writes to urge ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). MDLC is Maryland's designated Protection & Advocacy (P&A) organization, providing free legal advocacy services to people with all types of disabilities, of all ages, statewide. For over 30 years, the national P&A Network has been mandated by Congress to protect the civil rights of all individuals with disabilities.

The CRPD is a non-discrimination treaty that seeks to achieve the same goals as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other U.S. disability laws: to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, inclusion and integration into all aspects of society. It is the first international treaty to address the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. The CRPD is important to all people with disabilities, including U.S. veterans, service members, overseas workers and travelers with disabilities. Ratification of the CRPD will reinforce America's global leadership and position the United States to advance disability rights worldwide with the 129 nations and the European Union that are already parties to the treaty. Ratification of the CPRD is required for the U.S. to participate in the CRPD Conference of States Parties and elections to the Committee on the Rights or Persons with Disabilities, both of which will guide the treaty's implementation.

Through these mechanisms, the United States can provide guidance and influence 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 U.S. 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.

This treaty will have no impact on U.S. sovereignty. The United States has ratified a number of international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and for decades has participated in international human rights bodies and committees. These previously ratified human rights treaties contain rights that Americans have long enjoyed, such as the right to equality under the law, the right to due process, and the right to be free from discrimination. The U.S. ratified these treaties because they adhere to long established American values. United States' ratification of the CRPD would demonstrate our nation's continued commitment to the norm that all individuals with disabilities shall be accorded equal rights as those without disabilities.

Ratification of the CRPD by the U.S. will open new markets for American products, technologies, and services that assist persons with disabilities, and will put the U.S. in the best position to export them worldwide. Many businesses and associations, such as IBM, Consumer Electronics Association, Adobe, AT&T and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce support the CRPD for this reason.

In addition, ratification of the CRPD will assist veterans and others with disabilities who want to work, travel or study abroad by improving physical, technological, and communication access outside the United States. Among the more than 600 organizations supporting ratification are over 20 veteran services organizations representing all generations of veterans, including: the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, and Blinded Veterans Association.

The CRPD affirms America's leadership in protecting and promoting the human and civil rights of persons with disabilities. We thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Virginia Knowlton Marcus  
Executive Director  
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