



October 18, 2013

The Honorable Robert Menendez
The Honorable Bob Corker
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
444 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Robert Menendez and Ranking Member Bob Corker,

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (The Task Force) is the oldest national organization advocating for the civil and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and their families. Today, we write in support of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD is a non-discrimination treaty seeking to achieve the same goals as, and is modeled on, the bipartisan Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the bipartisan ADA Amendments and other existing disability laws in the 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 the estimated 4 million LGBT people living with disabilities. The CRPD is especially important to LGBT people because it embodies equal treatment and non-discrimination in access to rehabilitation, employment and educational opportunities. LGBT older adults, low-income individuals and those living with HIV/AIDS or other chronic illnesses are exceptionally vulnerable.

The United States can and should foster inclusion across all segments of society. Our country can 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 ratifying the CRPD, we are taking steps to level the playing field and remove all barriers experienced by people with disabilities. 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.

The Task Force 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 we ask you for your support and leadership on this issue.

If you have additional questions, please contact Stacey Long at slong@theTaskForce.org or (202) 639-6307.

Sincerely,

Rea Carey
Executive Director

Cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
The Honorable Christopher Coons
The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Chris Murphy
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Edward J. Markey
The Honorable James E. Risch
The Honorable Marco Rubio
The Honorable Ron Johnson
The Honorable Jeff Flake
The Honorable John McCain
The Honorable John Barrasso
The Honorable Rand Paul