



Southern Tier Independence Center

Access your world.

October 29, 2013

Dear Senators,

I am writing to urge your support for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I could list all the reasons (and there are very many) to support this treaty, but I think a couple stories could make my point better.

My youngest daughter is married to a man who serves in the US military. In the past they were stationed in Florida, but they are now stationed overseas. My daughter works at the Landstuhl Hospital in Germany. This is the hospital that receives wounded American warriors, as well as our wounded allies. Often the wounds are very serious (including amputations, burns, etc.). Wounded American veterans will return to Walter Reed and eventually, their home communities. While not perfect, access is definitely better here than in very many other places in the world. Many of the foreign wounded return to countries that do not have the therapists, durable medical equipment, and assistive technology that can assist these men in their recovery. And in many of these countries overall disability access is poor to non-existent.

My middle child has multiple disabilities. We have traveled twice to see our family members who are stationed in Germany and while there we have also traveled to neighboring countries. Although our family spends a great deal of time researching access before we travel, access and attitudes are two areas that one cannot fully anticipate or plan. This past summer as we were riding a train, we watched four people pick up a person in a wheelchair to help her board and disembark the train. Perhaps you, too, have observed the difficulty for people with disabilities and their families if they lived in, were stationed, or visited certain areas of the world.

The United States has the opportunity to be a leader in this area of civil rights. The ADA and other laws were built upon the advocacy of persons with disabilities over many decades. We are still fighting battles over barriers and discrimination here and overseas. Passing this treaty will be a very important step, one I believe the Senate needs to make. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Ruff

Susan Ruff
Advocacy Director