



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

July 10, 2012

Honorable John F. Kerry, Committee Chair
Honorable Richard G. Lugar, Ranking Member
Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
446 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20520

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

Dear Senators Kerry and Lugar:

As you know, on May 17th the Obama Administration submitted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to the United States Senate for its advice and consent, and a week later a bipartisan group of seven Senators came out in support of the treaty. The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), a coalition of national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations, urges the Senate to quickly consider and ratify the CRPD. This vital nondiscrimination treaty seeks to achieve the same goals as existing disability laws in the United States: to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society.

On July 27, 2010, during the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), CCD members encouraged the Senate to quickly act on the treaty package once submitted by the Administration. We renew this call for swift attention and ratification of the Convention.

With the passage of the landmark ADA in 1990, our nation established itself as a world leader in ensuring the human rights of individuals with disabilities. The ADA was the first major piece of domestic legislation in the world to address the discrimination, legal challenges, and physical and systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. The ADA has served as a beacon to people around the world and a model legislation which other nations have emulated to protect and advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The United States has further led

efforts in the education of children with disabilities, beginning in 1975 with the passage of the forerunner legislation to today's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congress took the critical steps in protecting the rights of citizens with disabilities by enacting in bi-partisan fashion the ADA, IDEA, and other legislation, but the CRPD will further the goal that these protections are guaranteed for United States citizens, corporations, and organizations throughout the world.

The CRPD establishes international standards regarding the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities, and creates a common basis for greater civic and political participation, self-sufficiency, and independent living. 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 health care. The Convention is furthermore consistent with not only the ADA, but also with IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and numerous other U.S. laws.

One hundred and fourteen nations as well as the European Union have ratified the CRPD as of June 2012, including important allies of the United States. We hope that the Senate again comes together in bipartisan fashion, as it did in passing the ADA and the more recent Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), to ratify the CRPD and ensure our global leadership in disability and human rights.

The treaty package submitted by the Administration furthers the goal of disability laws in the United States of ensuring the equal rights and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities. The reservations, understandings, and declarations offered by the Administration allow the United States to meet the obligations of the treaty while remaining consistent with U.S. domestic law.

The standards in the CRPD carry moral authority, which lend weight and credibility to efforts in all parts of the world to achieve justice, equality and inclusion for individuals with disabilities. The United States' ratification of the treaty will continue our country's distinguished tradition as a world leader for people with disabilities as evidenced by the ADA. Ratification will allow U.S. participation on the CRPD Conference of States Parties, create U.S. eligibility to serve on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and thus allow the U.S. to provide input into the implementation of the treaty and the development of disability rights. Such participation 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.

We, the undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, are committed to our country's leadership for the rights and empowerment of the 650 million people with disabilities worldwide. We believe the ratification of the CRPD will allow the United States to continue in our global leadership in this area, and therefore urge the Senate to quickly consider and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

American Association on Health Disability

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Council of the Blind

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for the Blind

American Music Therapy Association

American Network of Community Options and Resources

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

APSE

Association for Assistive Technology Act Programs

Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism National Committee

Autism Speaks

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Brain Injury Association of America

Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

Council for Exceptional Children

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

Easter Seals

Epilepsy Foundation

Family Voices

Goodwill Industries International

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association

Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Down Syndrome Society
National Health Law Program
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Rehabilitation Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
RESNA, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of
North America
School Social Work Association of America
Spina Bifida Association
TASH
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Arc of the United States
The Jewish Federations of North America
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association
United States International Council on Disabilities
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association
Vietnam Veterans of America
World Institute on Disability

cc: Senator John Barrasso
Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Benjamin Cardin
Senator Robert Casey, Jr.
Senator Christopher Coons
Senator Bob Corker
Senator Jim DeMint
Senator Richard Durbin
Senator James Inhofe
Senator Johnny Isakson
Senator Mike Lee
Senator Robert Menendez
Senator James Risch
Senator Marco Rubio
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Tom Udall
Senator Jim Webb
Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Judith Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights
Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President of the United States