

Members of the Foreign Relations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

June 21, 2012

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned members of the Jewish Disability Network, urge you to hold hearings this month on the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Convention realizes an international effort to achieve global goals of economic self-sufficiency, equality of opportunity, full participation, and independent living for people with disabilities. These noble goals are enshrined in our own Americans with Disabilities Act, a model for the Convention. The Convention will enable Americans with disabilities who work or travel abroad, such as veterans or members of military families with disabilities, to access the same protections abroad as they enjoy in America.

No new legislation will be required by U.S. ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, nor does the Convention impose any new costs. In fact, as noted, much of the treaty is grounded in American laws already on the books. All of these issues, and others, would be well explored in a hearing, hopefully moving the treaty closer to ratification.

Judaism has long supported the rights of people with disabilities, for as we read in Leviticus 19:14, "You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind." This teaching inspires us to be proactive in lowering barriers placed by society, whether intended or not, before people with disabilities. Only by doing this can we ensure that people with disabilities around the world are included as full members of society.

We must move quickly to ratify the treaty. The disability rights community has united behind this issue that is so critical for persons with disabilities the world over. We cannot allow this window of opportunity to close and fail to help meet the needs of millions of people with disabilities worldwide. Moreover, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has a Committee which guides implementation of the treaty. Only those countries that have ratified the Convention can nominate members to serve on the Committee, and American leadership in this arena is critical to the ultimate success of the treaty. With the next elections for the Committee approaching in September, it is vital that the U.S. ratifies this treaty and lends its expertise to the global disability movement.

We know you stand with us in wanting to ensure full participation and access for people with disabilities the world over. We urge you and your Senate colleagues to hold hearings this month on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and move toward its ratification with all due speed.

Sincerely,

The Jewish Disability Network

Anti-Defamation League  
Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies  
B'nai B'rith International  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago  
National Council of Jewish Women  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Union of Reform Judaism  
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
UJA-Federation of New York