

June 19, 2012

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 Senator:

The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) works to advance the civil and human rights of people with disabilities through legal advocacy, training, education and public policy and legislative development. 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. We are writing to support ratification of the CRPD.

The CRPD is a non-discrimination treaty seeking to achieve the same goals as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other existing disability laws in 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 our veterans and service members with disabilities as it embodies equal treatment and non-discrimination in access to rehabilitation, employment and educational opportunities.

The United States has always been a leader in setting the standards for 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, and to this day serves as a model for legislative development around the world. The US also has led the efforts in education through the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other legislations. These laws have always been enacted in a bi-partisan fashion and the CRPD will further that goal for guaranteeing such protections for US citizens, corporations and organizations throughout the world. 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.

One hundred and fourteen nations have ratified the CRPD as of June 2012, including important allies of the United States, as well as the European Union. 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 globally. 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.

The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) is committed to our country's leadership for the rights and empowerment of the 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide. We believe the ratification of the CRPD will allow the U.S. continue in our global leadership in this area, therefore urge the Senate to quickly consider and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge swift ratification of the CRPD to ensure global disability rights.

Sincerely,



Susan Henderson  
Executive Director