



American ideals. Universal values.

November 4, 2013

The Honorable Robert Menendez  
Chairman, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
444 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6225

The Honorable Bob Corker  
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
446 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6225

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker:

I am writing to express Human Rights First's strong support for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("disabilities treaty"). As an American organization whose central mission is to advance U.S. global leadership on human rights, we believe the United States should be leading the fight for inclusion and justice worldwide.

More than a billion people—approximately 15 percent of the world's population—live with some form of disability. Many face barriers that prevent them from participating fully and effectively as equal members of society. When the United States enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, it inspired a global movement to protect the rights of disabled people everywhere. That movement produced the disabilities treaty, which declared that all people, regardless of ability, deserve to live in dignity. Today, 138 nations—including every major U.S. ally—have ratified the treaty.

On December 5, in recognition of his pioneering advocacy on behalf of the disabled, Human Rights First will honor former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole with our Beacon Prize for American global leadership on human rights. When he accepted the 1996 Republican nomination for President, Senator Dole said, "I believe the ultimate imperative for growth and opportunity is to advance human dignity." Senator Dole's championing of the ADA and the disabilities treaty exemplifies the best of American leadership on human rights. As he rightly observed, ratification of the treaty would reaffirm our country's "common values of equality, access, and inclusion for all individuals with disabilities."

Thank you for your leadership in convening a hearing on the Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities treaty in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on November 5. We hope the hearing leads to the Senate's prompt ratification of this important human rights treaty.

With respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elisa Massimino". The script is fluid and cursive, with a small dash above the 'i' in "Massimino".

Elisa Massimino  
President & CEO