

November 4, 2013

The Honorable Bob Menendez  
Chairman  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bob Corker  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker,

We are writing on behalf of that National Fair Housing Alliance and our 220 members in support of United States ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). We are pleased that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is holding hearings on CRPD and submit this letter of support for the hearing record.

The National Fair Housing Alliance is the only national organization dedicated solely to ending discrimination in housing through enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, and familial status.

Unfortunately, housing discrimination against people with disabilities is still a big issue in this country. According to NFHA's 2013 Trends Report,<sup>1</sup> 55.6% of all housing discrimination complaints filed to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development were on the basis of disability. NFHA has recently uncovered housing discrimination against people with disabilities in places like Arkansas, where housing providers were denying reasonable accommodation requests, and Texas, where housing construction companies failed to design complexes in accordance with disability requirements under the Fair Housing Act.

The CRPD is a non-discrimination treaty which seeks to ensure that countries across the globe provide people with disabilities with the same rights as everyone else, so that they can live full, satisfying and productive lives. This global treaty was inspired by and embodies the bedrock American ideals that form the basis of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). These principles,

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<sup>1</sup> NFHA. Modernizing the Fair Housing Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 2013 Fair Housing Trends Report.



so important to us as a civil and human rights organization devoted to protecting and advancing the rights of all humans, include non-discrimination, equality, inclusion in society, accessibility and respect for the inherent dignity of all persons, including persons with disabilities.

According to the latest census data, 18.7 percent of all Americans have some type of disability. People of color experience disability at the following rates<sup>2</sup>: American Indians/Alaskan Natives experience the highest rate of disability at 16.3%; Black or African American at 13.9%; non-Hispanic Whites at 13.2%; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander at 8.8%; Hispanic or Latino (of any race) at 8.4%; and Asian at 6.4%. In addition, females experience a rate of disability at 12.4% and males at 11.9%. Furthermore, persons 65 years or older experience the highest rate of disability at 36.6%; persons 18 to 64 years at 10.2%; persons 5 to 17 years at 5.2%; and persons under 5 years at 0.8%.

The CRPD will benefit millions of individuals with disabilities around the world. U.S. ratification will also benefit Americans, particularly those veterans, business leaders, scientists, students and other disabled Americans who seek to live, work or travel abroad. The National Fair Housing Alliance is committed to ensuring that our country maintains its leadership role in promoting the rights and dignity of all people with disabilities. By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities we will demonstrate our respect to those Americans disabled through war and conflict and other incidents and can stand with the rest of the world in advancing the civil and human rights of people with disabilities around the world.

Sincerely,

Shanna L. Smith  
President and CEO

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates