

National Organization for Women



Nov. 1, 2013

The Hon. Robert Menendez
Chair
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Senate Dirksen 444
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Bob Corker
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Senate Dirksen 446
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker,

We are writing on behalf of the National Organization for Women (NOW), representing hundreds of chapters in every state and the District of Columbia, with hundreds of thousands of members and contributing supporters. We are pleased that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is holding hearings on CRPD and submit this letter of support for the hearing record. We are asking you to support ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and to take a leadership role in moving this important treaty to a successful vote in the Senate.

NOW along with members of our Disability Rights Ad Hoc Committee were disappointed that the CRPD was not ratified in the previous Congress. Women and girls in the U.S. and across the globe who strive to overcome a disability are often forced to contend with additional barriers due to their gender and race. They are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence as well as less likely to receive education and training to protect themselves and to improve their economic well-being. And, we know that many women and girls with disabilities live at the edge of poverty and that there must better awareness of their needs and of how societies must remove barriers and enhance their educational and employment opportunities.

Nearly one in five persons in the U.S. has a disability, with 12.4 percent of females and 11.9 percent of males reporting a disability according to the latest census data. Individuals 65 years and older report the highest disability rate of 36.6 percent. Among persons of color, the census data indicate that American Indian/Native Americans and African American have higher rates of persons with disabilities. The number of persons with disabilities worldwide may be considerably higher, especially in developing countries and in those nations experiencing armed conflict.

The U.S. led the world in our progressive Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) There is no reason why we should not ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 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. These principles, so important to us as a civil and human rights organization devoted to protecting and advancing the rights of women, include non-discrimination, equality, inclusion in

society, accessibility and respect for the inherent dignity of all persons, including persons with disabilities.

The U.S. has a great deal of experience—through the ADA, our technology and our creative know-how—to share with the rest of the world. But most importantly, by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities we will demonstrate our respect for individuals 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 disabled people around the world.

The National Organization for Women is committed to ensuring that our country maintains its leadership role in promoting the rights and dignity of all people with disabilities and we strongly urge members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to approve and move to a floor vote the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry O'Neill", with a stylized, elongated initial "T" and "O".

Terry O'Neill
President