

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ALLIANCE

Alexander Graham Bell
Association for the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing

American Academy
of Audiology

American Academy of
Otolaryngology-Head and
Neck Surgery

American Cochlear Implant
Alliance

American Society for
Deaf Children

American Speech Language-
Hearing Association

Conference of Educational
Administrators of Schools
and Programs for the Deaf

Council of American
Instructors of the Deaf

Hands & Voices

Hearing Health Foundation

Hearing Loss Association
of America

International Hearing
Society

National Association
of the Deaf

National Court Reporters
Association

National Cued Speech
Association

Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf

Telecommunications for the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing,
Inc.

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June 2, 2014

Chairman Robert Menendez
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Bob Corker
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker:

On behalf of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance (DHHA), a coalition of consumer and professional organizations dedicated to federal public policy that can improve the quality of life for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, we are writing today with our strong support of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Treaty which will be debated over the next few months.

Similar to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the principles of the CRPD include equality, non-discrimination, inclusion in society, accessibility, and respect for inherent dignity. Twenty-four years ago on July 26th, President George H.W. Bush signed the ADA, calling for the "walls of discrimination to come tumbling down." Since that time, the ADA has been model legislation for ending discriminatory practices throughout the world and a key inspiration for the CRPD.

One hundred and forty-five nations have ratified the CRPD, including important allies of the U.S. The treaty reflects core American values such as the dignity of the individual, access to justice, respect for the home and family, and the right to education. The CRPD is consistent with not only the ADA, but also with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and numerous other U.S. laws.

The CRPD seeks to ensure that countries across the globe provide people with disabilities the same rights as everyone else in order to live full, satisfying and productive lives. To this end, the CRPD will create greater access for Americans serving, working, traveling, and studying abroad. The treaty package submitted to the Senate this May includes reservations, understandings, and a declaration that allow the United States to meet the obligations of the treaty without requiring any costs or changes in law.

The DHHA firmly believes that the ratification of the CRPD will allow the U.S. to continue in our global leadership on disability rights. We therefore urge the Senate to continue the bipartisan tradition of supporting the disability community by uniting in support of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sincerely,



Lise Hamlin
Co-Chair



Adam Finkel
Co-Chair

cc: Sen. Tom Harkin
cc: Senate Foreign Relations Committee