



COUNCIL ON COMMUNITY ADVOCACY
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1000
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301.588.8252

April 22, 2013

Mr. Jeff Rosen, Chairperson
Ms. Kamilah Oni-Martin Proctor, Co-Vice Chair
c/o The National Council on Disability
1331 F Street, NW
Suite 850
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairpersons Rosen and Proctor:

As you are aware, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted on December 13, 2006. Despite Senator John McCain's steadfast support almost exactly six years to the date, on December 3, 2012 the CRPD was defeated in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 61-38. Members of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities Council on Community Advocacy (AUCD COCA) were present on that disappointing day and witnessed retired Senator Bob Dole on the floor of the Senate firmly support the CRPD treaty as well. We witnessed Senator McCain exclaim to his fellow Senators: "*The first thing I think we ought to understand is this is not anybody's treaty. It is not President Obama's treaty. It is not John Kerry's treaty. It is not even Bob Dole's treaty. The vote on the treaty is the right thing to do on its merits.*"

AUCD COCA, a membership of persons with disabilities and family members, also believes *it is the right thing to do*. We stand with the NCD in its recommendation that the United States Senate join the 126 countries in ratifying this historic treaty. We recommend that the NCD reconvene its UN Convention Working Group to address misconceptions about the treaty. Misconceptions such as the threat to the United States sovereignty, a requirement for Federal or State governments to take actions, changing the law on abortion or that ratifying the CRPD would take decisions out of parents' hands and let the U.N. or the Federal Government decide what is best for our children. The treaty has nothing to do with abortion, it doesn't give the Federal Government or any State government new powers with regard to children with

disabilities nor can the treaty be used as a basis for a lawsuit in State or Federal court. We recommend that NCD develop a report rebutting this rhetoric. We also recommend that NCD position itself to make membership recommendations during the establishment of the treaty committee when the CRPD is ratified. Since this committee will review reports submitted by countries on the steps in which they have taken to implement the convention in addition to making nonbinding recommendations for additional steps, we believe it is imperative that the treaty committee is culturally and ethnically diverse and include people with disabilities.

We honor your leadership in this area and stand as a committed partner with you and others in encouraging the U. S. Senators to support ratification of the treaty and in turn encourage other countries to create accessible environments for both their citizens with disabilities as well as Americans with disabilities, who travel, work, study, and serve abroad. We will continue to educate our peers, both those with disabilities and those without disabilities, about the treaty.

Sincerely,

Shannon Caldwell
COCA Family Co-Chair

Dawn Olson
COCA Person with a Disability Co-Chair