April 17, 2018

The Honorable Bob Corker                                      The Honorable Bob Menendez
Chairman                                                    Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations                              Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate                                        United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510                                         Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley                                 The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman                                                    Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary                                  Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate                                        United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510                                         Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Menendez, Chairman Grassley, and Ranking Member Feinstein:

On behalf of the American Bar Association (ABA) and our over 400,000 members, I write to express our support for prompt ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. We also urge Congress to pass the “Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act.”

To halt discrimination against individuals with print disabilities, the Treaty requires contracting parties to adopt exceptions and limitations in their domestic copyright law to permit reproduction of published works into accessible formats usable by the print disabled. The United States has already adopted exceptions in our copyright laws that allow for lawful reproduction of accessible content for individuals with print disabilities. However, over 130 World Intellectual Property Organization-designated countries have not adopted these exceptions, so the reproduction of works in Braille (or other forms) for personal use in those countries may constitute a copyright violation. In addition, these exceptions may not always explicitly permit the import or export of accessible formats across international borders. Ratifying the Treaty would help open doors to countries worldwide, allowing literature to be disseminated in accessible formats with no borders.

As a supporter of the Marrakesh Treaty since its negotiation, the ABA recommends swift ratification to ensure greater access to published works by people with print disabilities. We would be pleased to assist you and your committees with any questions regarding this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman