December 3, 2012

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Bar Association and its nearly 400,000 members, I write to urge you to vote in favor of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

In 2010, the ABA adopted a resolution calling on the United States to ratify and implement the CRPD. Ratification is essential to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. As the world’s historic leader in disability policy, the United States has a responsibility to share its knowledge and protect the interests of American citizens abroad by joining in the international dialogue on civil rights for individuals with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are among the largest minority groups around the world. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 650 million people (approximately 10% of the world’s population) live with disabilities. Unfortunately, persons with disabilities are often excluded from the mainstream of society in education, employment, and housing. Discrimination against them can be explicit or implicit, but the result is the same—persons with disabilities are frequently denied their basic human rights.

The CRPD sets forth globally accepted legal standards on disability rights and clarifies the application of human rights principles to persons with disabilities. It also serves as an authoritative reference point for the development and refinement of relevant disability law and policy and is intended as an instrument that is cross-disability and applicable across economic sectors. Global implementation of the CRPD will benefit not only citizens of countries that have not previously ensured protection of these rights, but also Americans with disabilities and their families traveling to or working within those countries.

Significantly, ratification will not require changes in domestic law or impose any new financial costs. However, ratification would send a clear signal to the world of our support for the human rights principles of the convention, as well as our role as a world leader for people with disabilities. The treaty enjoys broad bipartisan support in Washington and around the country, including from civil rights and legal groups, military and veteran’s organizations, and the business community. For these reasons, the ABA strongly urges you to support the CRPD.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman