

CEC Supports U.S. Ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Treaty seeks to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency

Arlington, Va., July 12, 2012 — The Council for Exceptional Children, joining the broader human rights and disability communities, is calling on the U.S. Senate to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a landmark nondiscrimination treaty sharing the same goals as existing disability laws in the United States that would empower individuals with disabilities across the globe to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society, including education.

The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), will hold a hearing today on the CRPD at 9 a.m. in Room G-50 of Dirksen Building. Disability advocates are hopeful that the hearing will lead to the U.S. Senate quickly ratifying the treaty, providing leadership from the United States on this critical human rights issue, said Deborah Ziegler, CEC's associate executive director for policy and advocacy.

According to UNESCO, 90 percent of children with disabilities in developing countries have no access to school, and the International Labour Organization reports that in some countries, the unemployment rate among individuals with disabilities is as high as 80 percent. It is unclear how many people with disabilities in the world still live in institutions.

“CEC is grateful to Sen. Kerry and members of the Committee for convening this hearing today,” Ziegler said. “The Convention reflects core values and principles, such as dignity of the individual, importance of family decision-making, and access to justice, education, independent living, and employment. It is a beacon of hope to people with disabilities around the world.”

Ratification is only the first step

Currently, there are 153 signatures to the Convention and 117 ratifications of the Convention. While it is encouraging that so many parties have signed the Convention, Ziegler said, less than half of all eligible parties have ratified it, including the United States, an international leader in disability policy and practice.

Ultimately ratification will not be enough to ensure effective implementation of the Convention, but is a critical first initial step and will allow the United States to participate in official discussions on how the CRPD will be implemented and work alongside other parties to uphold the rights of individuals with disabilities.

“To engender the real hope the Convention embodies, the attitudes of both the general public and Government must change,” Ziegler said. “People must stop perceiving persons with disabilities as objects of assistance and intervention and begin to view them as people with rights.”

Next steps for CRPD

On July 30, 2009, the United States signed the treaty. On May 17, 2012, the Obama Administration submitted the treaty to the U.S. Senate for their advice and consent for ratification, and a week later a bipartisan group of seven Senators came out in support of the treaty. U.S. ratification of the CRPD requires a “resolution of ratification” achieved by 2/3 support (67 supermajority votes) in the Senate.

When passed the treaty must be signed by the President and it “enters into force,” meaning that the treaty becomes law. The CRPD will require no change to laws or additional appropriations in the United States. Most provisions of the treaty are consistent with current U.S. legislation.

**To learn more about the CRPD, please read [CEC’s CRPD Issue Brief](#).
For more information about CEC, visit www.cec.sped.org**

CEC is an international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC’s mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy.

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