

Consortium for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities

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The Honorable William Clay
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Clay:

The undersigned member organizations of the Consortium for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (CCDD) and other national organizations that advocate for the rights of America's 36 million citizens with disabilities and chronic disorders, ask you today to become an original co-sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1988. This bill, which was conceived by the National Council on the Handicapped, an independent federal agency, seeks to establish a comprehensive national mandate to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities. Representatives Tony Coelho, Major Owens and Silvio Conte and Senators Tom Harkin and Lowell Weicker will introduce this legislation in late April.

It is time for this country to address the reality that Americans with disabilities are relegated to second-class citizenship. This long overdue legislation simply states that people with disabilities are entitled to the same rights that all other Americans take for granted -- the right to communicate, the right to work, the right to live in the community, and the right to socialize.

We believe that it is unconscionable that in 1988, persons with disabilities, America's largest minority, do not have the same federal civil rights protections that are enjoyed by women and by other minority groups. Americans with disabilities are not covered by Title II or Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or by Title VIII of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1988 seeks to correct this inequity and grant Americans with disabilities the same protections as that afforded to women and to other minority groups.

The American taxpayer will continue to pay for the cost of discrimination until our society's physical, communication and attitudinal barriers toward persons with disabilities are removed. Currently, one out of every twelve federal tax dollars goes toward disability programs (second only to the defense budget). As our population ages, this demand on the federal budget will increase. Americans can no longer afford to segregate people with disabilities.

We urge you on behalf of all Americans to become an original co-sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1988. Please contact Bob Silverstein, Staff Director, Subcommittee on the Handicapped (4-6265), Terry Muilenburg, Sen. Weicker's office (4-1285), Heidi Hicks, Rep. Coelho's office (5-6131), or Peter Gossens, Rep. Conte's office, (5-2460).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

American Association of University Affiliated Programs
American Association on Mental Retardation
ACLD, An Association for Children and Adults with Learning
Disabilities
American Diabetes Association
American Disabled for Accessible Transportation
American Foundation for the Blind
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Association for Retarded Citizens of the United States
Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in
Post-Secondary Education
Disabled But Able to Vote
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Epilepsy Foundation of America
Mental Health Law Project
National Association of the Deaf
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Council on Independent Living
National Easter Seal Society
National Mental Health Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Self-Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.
Spina Bifida Association of America
The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps
Tourette Syndrome Association
United Cerebral Palsy Associations
World Institute on Disability