

Hello, my name is Clarisa Sherman and I'm from Temple Beth Sholom in Santa Ana, California. Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me today. I am in Washington with other teens as part of the Reform Jewish Movement and as part of the Religious Action Center, which is the legislative office of the Union for Reform Judaism whose 900 congregations across North America encompass 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), whose membership includes over 2000 Reform rabbis. I would like to discuss the issue of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

I would like to state how important it is to offer support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. By providing your support for this issue, you are giving a voice to those who are often overlooked or ignored due to their disabilities, including approximately 56 million Americans who have some form of disability. The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is a pressing issue not only within the United States but is important throughout the world. An estimated 1 billion people, 15 percent of the world population, live with a disability. The disability rights movement is often at a setback as a result of the myths and stereotypes that inaccurately portray people with disabilities as unemployable, incapable of succeeding in schools or unable to become

contributing members of society. This trail of people with disabilities is extremely offensive and is not an accurate portrayal of people with disabilities.

As a Jew, creating a fair and just environment in the workplace and in schools for people with disabilities is essential. As I mentioned by supporting the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities you're providing a voice for those who are overlooked because of their disability. In the book of proverbs, it states, "Speak up for those Who cannot speak... speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy". This means we should speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves or are often ignored; it means speak up and give a voice so that others will be heard; it means speak up for those who are different. Part of the Jewish teachings that we learn growing up is that we are obligated to care for the rights of people, in particular people with disabilities. "You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind."

(Leviticus 19:14)

The reason the issue concerning the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities is important to me is because I have personally experienced discrimination due to my own disability. My disability is invisible to someone who only sees me. I have dyslexia. And my

brother also has Tourette's syndrome. Throughout my life, my brother and I have had to fight the school district along side my mother for 504 programs that provide accommodations for our education which allows us to keep up with all the other students. In both cases we are provided notes and extra one on one help from our teachers. Let me tell you a little about my struggle with dyslexia. When I was little my dyslexia made academics extremely difficult for me; because of how severe my dyslexia was I was unable to learn how to read or write until I was in first grade. I faced discrimination from not only my peers but also from some of my teachers because I wasn't "smart enough" to keep up with the rest of the students. Every day I would struggle with all of the common core classes such as math, English and science because I wasn't getting the help I needed that is until I started working with the school district and got my 504 plan. A 504 program is designed specifically for a student to provide accommodations tailored to the student's disabilities to help give them an equal chance at receiving a substantial education. The 504 plan provided accommodations to be as successful as the rest of the students. As a result of my 504 plan and the accommodations that were provided me I've been able to become an advanced placement student achieving a GPA of 3.8 or higher in every year of my high school career. Without the support of the school I would not have

the opportunity to become as successful as I am now, I understand what it is like to be underestimated but I also understand what it is like to become extremely successful as a result of people giving me a chance to become successful.

I urge you to work with your Senate colleagues to ratify the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, and help support the rights of people with disabilities worldwide. Please give others like me the chance to be successful by supporting this convention and other bills that give those with disabilities to reach their full potential as I did.