



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

June 7, 2016

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal,

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Rights Task Force and Task Force on Employment and Training, we write in support of your amendment (#4255) to the fiscal year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to ensure that organizations and businesses who want to do business with the federal government understand and comply with long-standing laws that protect individuals with disabilities, veterans and others from employment discrimination. CCD is a coalition of national rights, advocacy, consumer and provider organizations representing this nation's 57 million Americans with disabilities.

Our task forces have been deeply disturbed by recent congressional efforts to weaken important employment nondiscrimination and affirmative hiring provisions included in the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 503). VEVRAA prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against protected veterans, and requires these employers to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these veterans. Section 503 of the Rehab Act provides similar protections for individuals with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities. Federal contractors represent almost one in every five jobs in this nation according to the Department of Labor. Your amendment will ensure that veterans and people with disabilities are not unfairly denied the opportunity to pursue and attain these jobs.

We are very concerned that the Senate's FY 2017 NDAA includes language (Section 829H) that would limit federal agencies' ability to learn whether organizations and businesses seeking to do business with the federal government are in compliance with VEVRAA, Section 503 and other employment laws. This knowledge is critical to the federal government's ability to ensure accountability in its contracting process. Therefore, we strongly support your amendment to remove Section 829H to protect the employment rights of veterans and people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

CCD Employment and Training Task Force

Kelly Buckland, Co-chair
National Council on Independent Living

Susan Goodman, Co-chair
National Down Syndrome Congress

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CCD Rights Task Force

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