

November 25, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell:

We write to urge you to schedule a vote to confirm Chai Feldblum to a second term as commissioner of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Commissioner Feldblum's nomination was approved by a bipartisan vote of the HELP Committee. We are extremely concerned about the possibility that Commissioner Feldblum's first term will expire at the end of this Congressional session without a vote on her renomination, leaving the Commission with a vacant seat.

The EEOC is a critically important agency for people with disabilities, who continue to face significant workplace discrimination. It is particularly urgent to have a fully functioning Commission to enforce the workplace rights of individuals with disabilities in light of the dramatic levels of unemployment and underemployment of people with disabilities. Working age people with significant disabilities participate in the workforce at less than one third of the rate of the general population. In addition, median earnings for workers with disabilities are less than two-thirds of those for workers without disabilities.

Commissioner Feldblum brings invaluable experience and talent to the Commission. During her first term, she has demonstrated tremendous knowledge, passion and leadership. She has stood out as someone who consistently reaches across party lines within the Commission and convenes conversations with both employee and employer representatives in order to fully understand all perspectives and identify common ground. She has promoted constructive dialogue and informed policymaking, and at the same time has worked hard to ensure strong and meaningful protections for employees and job applicants. She was a critical player in facilitating the Commission's issuance of strong bipartisan regulations implementing the ADA Amendments Act and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

Commissioner Feldblum is always an active and thoughtful participant in the Commission's public meetings and stakeholder meetings, delves into the details and nuances of workplace issues, and uses her formidable intellect to develop solutions that work for all. She has also worked tirelessly to train and educate stakeholders across the nation, helping the employer community as well as employees and job seekers understand and implement the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as other laws that the Commission enforces.

We urge you to schedule a vote promptly on Commissioner Feldblum's nomination so that the Senate can confirm her to a second term.

Sincerely,

American Diabetes Association

The Advocacy Center (Louisiana)

The Advocacy Institute

Arizona Center for Disability Law

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (Delaware)

Disabilities Rights Center, Inc. (New Hampshire)

Disability Rights California

Disability Rights Center of Arkansas

Disability Rights Center of Maine

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Disability Rights Iowa

Disability Rights North Carolina

Disability Rights Oregon

Disability Rights Vermont, Inc.

Epilepsy Foundation

Equip for Equality (Illinois)

The Georgia Advocacy Office

Hawaii Disability Rights Center

Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center

The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People (Colorado)

Maryland Disability Law Center

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Rights Protection and Advocacy

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Employment Law Project

National Employment Lawyers Association

Native American Disability Law Center, Inc.

Public Justice Center

South Dakota Advocacy Services

United Spinal Association

University Legal Services (District of Columbia)

Michael Waterstone

Associate Dean for Research and Academic Centers

J. Howard Ziemann Fellow and Professor of Law

Loyola Law School Los Angeles*

* For identification purposes only

cc: Senator Harkin and Senator Alexander