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October 4, 2017

Addressed to: Representatives Paul Ryan (Speaker of the House) and Nancy Pelosi (Minority Leader)

Regarding the ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017 - the wrong avenue to "restore the integrity" of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - the following 170 organizations sign onto this letter.

On July 26, 2017, millions of people with disabilities throughout this country celebrated the 27th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Unfortunately, many in the business community decided to celebrate the anniversary by diminishing this historic civil rights legislation through a letter of support for the ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 620). Their letter supporting this extremely dangerous legislation, which was sent to Congress, was titled [It's Time to Restore the Integrity of the ADA](#).

This bill was introduced by Representative Ted Poe of Texas in the 115th Congress. It would create significant obstacles for people with disabilities to enforce their rights under Title III of the ADA to access public accommodations and would impede their ability to engage in daily activities and participate in mainstream society.

It is supported by the businesses that signed on to the above letter, which feel they have been hurt by a "loophole" that punishes them for not being compliant with the ADA 27 years after its enactment. Their letter states, "We support the spirit and intent of the ADA and our members strive to remain fully accessible so that all of our customers and guests can enjoy a full range of services and amenities."

However, what is being proposed actually harms millions of people with disabilities living in America by weakening their civil rights and punishing them for the awful actions of a few attorneys. The bill does the opposite of its intent. It places a new burden on individuals with disabilities, who must now prove the denial of access, and adds significant barriers to the process. The United States [Department of Justice Civil Rights Division agrees and did an analysis of H.R. 620 that was sent to Congress](#). This legislation extends the process by adding steps aimed at "eliminating the unintended consequences of drive-by lawsuits," which will delay true access to those the ADA is intended to protect by:

1. Removing the incentive for businesses to comply with the ADA
2. Requiring a person with the disability to file a written notice specifying the exact ADA provisions that are being violated
3. Giving the business owner 60 days to acknowledge the notice and 120 additional days to begin to fix the violation; a total of 180 days (6 months!) to deny access.

The ADA includes education, training, and technical support provided at no cost by the Department of Justice and the Regional ADA Centers across the country. There are multiple disability organizations around the country that assist with creating an accessible facility and/or business. Some do this important training for free, others will do at a nominal fee. They do this not only to ensure the rights of people with disabilities as users or customers, but also in the hopes of providing employment for the community. A person with a disability is unable to work in any business that is not accessible for entry, lacks ability to function (too high shelves), or has barriers to pathway of travel inside or for essential needs such as restroom facilities. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is currently around 11%, nearly twice the unemployment rate for the general population*. This number is even higher for people of color and other disenfranchised communities who also have disabilities. The numbers for Native Americans with disabilities are triple this estimate. Having access to work in these places of business would make a significant contribution to ending this horrible statistic.

Persons with disabilities have long been marginalized and discriminated against by society and the ADA provided human and civil rights for our community. H.R. 620 would significantly change civil rights law for all people. This will set precedent because, for the first time in history, a protected class would have to provide notification of its intent to exercise their civil rights. No other protected class has to do this for public accommodations.

Changing the ADA does not solve what many see as the problem. It prohibits millions of people with disabilities from being consumers and employees in these places of business.

We urge Congress to maintain the integrity of the ADA and REJECT the notion that this historic civil rights legislation lacks integrity as indicated by businesses in their letter to the Hill on the ADA's 27th anniversary.

The undersigned organizations urge you to oppose The Education and Reform Act of 2017 and work on strengthening the rights of millions of people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Alabama

- Disability Rights and Resources (Birmingham, AL)
- Lakeshore Foundation (Birmingham, AL)

Alaska

- Access Alaska (Anchorage, AK)
- SILC of Alaska (Anchorage, AK)

Arizona

- Ability360 (Phoenix, AZ)
- Services Maximizing Independent Living and Empowerment (Yuma, AZ)

California

- California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (Sacramento, CA)
- Central Coast Center for Independent Living (Salinas, CA)
- Community Resources for Independent Living (Hayward, CA)
- Dayle McIntosh Center (Anaheim, CA)
- Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (Berkeley, CA)
- FREED Center for Independent Living (Grass Valley, CA)
- Independent Living Resource Center San Francisco (San Francisco, CA)
- Independent Living Resource Center (Santa Barbara, CA)
- Independent Living Resource Center San Francisco (San Francisco, CA)
- Placer Independent Resource Services (Auburn, CA)
- Resources for Independence Central Valley (Fresno, CA)
- Rolling Start Inc. (San Bernardino, CA)
- Silicon Valley Independent Living Center (San Jose, CA)
- Tri-County Independent Living (Eureka, CA)
- V-Day (San Francisco, CA)

Colorado

- Atlantis Community, Inc. (Denver, CO)
- Southwest Center for Independence (Durango, CO)

Connecticut

- Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. (Middletown, CT)
- Connecticut State Independent Living Council (Hartford, CT)

District of Columbia

- American Association of People with Disabilities (Washington, DC)
- American Civil Liberties Union (Washington, DC)
- American Network of Community Options and Resources – ANCOR (Washington, DC)
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network (Washington, DC)
- Center for Public Representation (Washington, DC)

- Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation (Washington, DC)
- Disability Power & Pride (Washington, DC)
- Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of Deaf communities – HEARD (Washington, DC)
- Justice in Aging (Washington, DC)
- National Disability Institute (Washington, DC)
- National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (Washington, DC)
- National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (Washington, DC)
- National Council on Independent Living – NCIL (Washington, DC)
- Parent to Parent USA (Washington, DC)
- TASH (Washington, DC)
- The Arc of the United States (Washington, DC)
- United Spinal Association (Washington, DC)

Florida

- disAbility Solutions for Independent Living, Inc. (Daytona Beach, FL)

Georgia

- Disability Connections, Middle GA Center for Independent Living, Inc. (Macon, GA)
- disABILITY LINK (Tucker, GA)
- National Down Syndrome Congress (Roswell, GA)

Hawaii

- Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (Pearl City, HI)
- Statewide Independent Living Council (Honolulu, HI)

Idaho

- Access Concepts and Training, Inc. (Boise, ID)
- Idaho State Independent Living Council (Boise, ID)
- Living Independence Network Corporation (Boise, ID)

Illinois

- HIGH IMPACT Mission-based Consulting & Training (Northbrook, IL)
- Illinois Iowa Center for Independent Living (Rock Island, IL)
- IMPRUVE (Chicago, IL)
- Jacksonville Area Center for Independent Living (Jacksonville, IL)
- LIFE Center for Independent Living (Bloomington, IL)
- National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities (Chicago, IL)
- Options Center for Independent Living (Bourbonnais, IL)
- Progress Center for Independent Living (Forest Park, IL)
- RAMP Center for Independent Living (Rockford, IL)
- Sibling Leadership Network (Chicago, IL)

Iowa

- Access 2 Independence of the Eastern Iowa Corridor (Iowa City, IA)
- Central Iowa Center for Independent Living (Des Moines, IA)
- Disabilities Resource Center of Siouxland (Sioux City, IA)
- Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (Des Moines, IA)
- South Central Iowa Center for Independent Living (Oskaloosa, IA)

Kansas

- Southeast Kansas Independent Living (Parsons, KS)

Maryland

- Accessible Resources for Independence (Glen Burnie, MD)
- American Association on Health and Disability (Rockville, MD)
- Association of University Centers on Disabilities (Silver Spring, MD)
- Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (Chevy Chase, MD)
- National Association of the Deaf (Silver Spring, MD)
- The Freedom Center (Frederick, MD)

Massachusetts

- Asperger Works, Inc. (Lawrence, MA)
- Center for Living and Working (Worcester, MA)
- Disability Policy Consortium of Massachusetts (Boston, MA)
- Independence Associates, Inc. (East Bridgewater, MA)
- Northeast Independent Living Program Inc. (Lawrence, MA)
- Stavros Center for Independent Living (Amherst, MA)

Michigan

- Disability Network Northern Michigan (Traverse City, MI)
- International Association of Assistance Dog Partners (Sterling Heights, MI)
- Peer Action Alliance (Muskegon, MI)

Missouri

- Nestle Purina (St. Louis, MO)
- Paraquad (St. Louis, MO)
- Rural Advocates for Independent Living (Kirksville, MO)
- Services for Independent Living (Columbia, MO)
- The Starkloff Disability Institute (St. Louis, MO)

Montana

- ADAPT Montana (Missoula, MT)
- Montana Statewide Independent Living Council (Helena, MT)
- Summit Independent Living (Missoula, MT)

New Jersey

- Alliance Center for Independence (Edison, NJ)

New York

- Center for Disability Rights (Rochester, NY)
- Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley (Troy, NY)
- International Action Center (New York, NY)
- Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc. (Levittown, NY)
- New York Association on Independent Living (Albany, NY)
- Northern Regional Center for Independent Living, Inc. (Watertown, NY)
- Not Dead Yet (Rochester, NY)
- Peoples' Power Assembly (New York, NY)
- The Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc. (Kingston, NY)
- Workers World Party (New York, NY)

Ohio

- Ability Center of Greater Toledo (Toledo, OH)
- Access Center for Independent Living (Dayton, OH)
- The Center for Disability Empowerment (Columbus, OH)

Oklahoma

- Progressive Independence (Norman, OK)

Oregon

- Lane Independent Living Alliance (Eugene, OR)

Pennsylvania

- Center for Independent Living of North Central PA (Williamsport, PA)
- Disability Rights Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, PA)
- Liberty Resources Inc. (Philadelphia, PA)

South Carolina

- Able South Carolina (Columbia, SC)
- disAbility Resource Center (dba) AccessAbility (North Charleston, SC)
- Family Connection of South Carolina (Columbia, SC)
- Portlight Strategies (Johns Island, SC)
- South Carolina Access & Independence Network (Columbia, SC)

Tennessee

- Empower Tennessee (Nashville, TN)
- Memphis Center for Independent Living (Memphis, TN)

Texas

- ADAPT of Texas (Austin, TX)
- ARCIL, Inc. (Austin, TX)
- Brazoria County Center for Independent Living (Angleton, TX)
- Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (Austin, TX)
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living (Corpus Christi, TX)

- Crockett Resource Center for Independent Living (Crockett, TX)
- Fort Bend Center for Independent Living (Sugar Land, TX)
- Houston Center for Independent Living (Houston, TX)
- Palestine Resource Center for Independent Living (Palestine, TX)
- Panhandle Independent Living Center (Amarillo, TX)
- Personal Attendant Coalition of Texas (Austin, TX)
- Road to Freedom Bus Tour (Austin, TX)
- SAILS (San Antonio, TX)
- Valley Association for Independent Living, Inc. (McAllen, TX)

Utah

- Utah Statewide Independent Living Council (Salt Lake City, UT)

Vermont

- Disabled Access & Advocacy of the Rutland Area (Rutland, VT)
- Green Mountain ADAPT (Montpelier, VT)
- National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (Waitsfield, VT)
- Vermont Care Partners (Montpelier, VT)
- Vermont Center for Independent Living (Montpelier, VT)
- Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights (Montpelier, VT)
- Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (Waterbury, VT)
- Vermont Legal Aid, Inc. (Burlington, VT)
- Women's March Vermont (Burlington, VT)
- Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Montpelier, VT)
- Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity (Brattleboro, VT)
- Vermont Psychiatric Survivors, Inc. (Rutland, VT)
- Vermont Statewide Independent Living Council (South Burlington, VT)

Virginia

- Appalachian Independence Center, Inc. (Abingdon, VA)
- Blue Ridge Independent Living Center (Roanoke, VA)
- Community Concepts, Inc. (Dumfries, VA)
- Eastern Shore Center for Independent Living, Inc. (Belle Haven, VA)
- Endependence Center Inc. (Norfolk, VA)
- Happy on Wheels, LLC (Arlington, VA)
- Independence Empowerment Center, Inc. (Manassas, VA)
- National Disability Mentoring Coalition (Falls Church, VA)
- New River Valley Disability Resource Center (Christiansburg, VA)
- Resources for Independent Living Inc. (Richmond, VA)
- The Advocacy Institute (Marshall, VA)
- The Arc of Northern Virginia (Falls Church, VA)
- The Disability Resource Center of the Rappahannock Area, Inc. (Fredericksburg, VA)

- Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (Harrisonburg, VA)

Washington

- Center for Independence (Lakewood, WA)
- Rooted in Rights (Seattle, WA)
- Washington State Independent Living Council (Lacey, WA)

West Virginia

- Appalachian Center for Independent Living (Charleston, WV)
- West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (Institute, WV)
- WVSU Student Access Advocates (Poca, WV)

Wisconsin

- Access to Independence (Madison, WI)
- Center for Independent Living Western Wisconsin (Menomonie, WI)
- IndependenceFirst (Milwaukee, WI)
- Independent Living Resources, Inc. (La Crosse, WI)
- Midstate Independent Living Choices (Stevens Point, WI)
- North Country Independent Living (Superior, WI)
- Options for Independent Living (Green Bay, WI)
- Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers (Madison, WI)

End Notes:

* U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (March 6, 2015). [Employment status of the civilian population by sex, age, and disability status, not seasonally adjusted](#). Retrieved March 29, 2015.