



September 6, 2017

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
2309 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Letter of Opposition to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Education and Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 620)

Dear Chair Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) writes in opposition to the ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 620). Section 2 of this bill states that this bill was written in *consultation with ... and representatives of the disability rights community*. Over 27 years ago, the ADA was enacted as a compromise between the disability and business community. The disability community gave up the ability to receive damages from failure to comply with the federal ADA by only allowing injunctive relief and attorney's fees for violations of the law. Unfortunately, over 27 years after enactment, there are still organizations, businesses, and companies who have yet to comply with this important civil rights law for persons with disabilities.

NDRN is the non-profit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) and Client Assistance Program (CAP) systems for individuals with disabilities. The P&As and CAPs were established by the United States Congress to protect the rights of people with disabilities and their families through legal support, advocacy, referral, and education. P&As and CAPs are in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands), and there is a P&A and CAP affiliated with the Native American Consortium which includes the Hopi, Navaho and San Juan Southern Paiute Nations in the Four Corners region of the Southwest. Collectively, the P&A and CAP Network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States.

H.R. 620 was not written in consultation with representatives of the disability rights community as it would create barriers to the civil rights for persons with disabilities that

do not exist in other civil rights laws. It seeks to limit the power of the ADA and reduce compliance with the law.

As was mentioned earlier, the ADA has been law for over 27 years, if a business has decided to not comply with the requirements of this legislation by this point, why should a person have to wait more time for enforcement of their civil rights? Should an individual who is not allowed to enter a restaurant because of their race, gender or religion, have to wait before seeking to enforce their civil rights? The disability community already compromised with the passage of the ADA by not allowing individuals to seek damages from violations of their civil rights, but now legislation like H.R. 620 seeks to erode the civil rights of people with disabilities.

Congress should be ensuring that people with disabilities have full access to the community through the strong enforcement of the ADA, not making it more difficult for people with disabilities to be fully participating members of society. As H.R. 620 would erode the civil rights of people with disabilities, we must oppose this legislation. Please contact Dara Baldwin, Senior Public Policy Analyst at dara.baldwin@ndrn.org or 202-408-9514 ext. 102 should you have any questions.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Curt Decker
Executive Director

Cc: House Judiciary Committee