

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2021

Greetings,

Thank you for joining the NCIL Annual Conference Virtual Rally. Since 1982, the NCIL has been at the forefront of disability advocacy, working tirelessly to create a more just society. Today, we honor the contributions of the NCIL, as well as the broad coalition of change-makers gathered at this event. Because of the courage and dedication of these advocates and allies, our policies, systems, and communities have changed for the better.

The theme of this year's conference, Liberty, Independence, Freedom, and Equity (LIFE), perfectly encapsulates the American promise: we are all created equal and entitled to the pursuit of happiness. For too long, Americans with disabilities have been denied the opportunity to shape their own destinies. Despite the sustained efforts of those in the disability justice and independent living movements, there is work to be done to make our American promise a reality.

As a U.S. Senator, I have fought to uphold the values of this year's NCIL Annual Conference. As attacks on our democracy threaten the liberty and sovereignty of the American people, I have led the charge to protect Americans' voices in our government by championing the For the People Act. Obstacles to the ballot box disproportionately impact marginalized communities, especially folks with disabilities and people of color, which makes passing legislation like the For the People Act—which would make voting more accessible, expanding automatic and same-day voter registration, vote-by-mail, and early voting—crucial to the well-being of our communities and our democracy.

I have also continued my advocacy for legislation to address inequities faced by LGBTQ+ folks in our public accommodations, and continue to work to build momentum for the Equality Act, legislation I wrote to prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Diverse identities and experiences enrich our communities; ensuring these protections in our shared spaces will make America stronger.

We all deserve to live, work, and participate in democracy without fear of discrimination. Please know that I will continue to honor the values of LIFE, and look forward to working alongside you to turn our vision for a fairer, more just America into a reality. As we celebrate the power and importance of the disability justice movement, let us renew our commitment to fighting for a more inclusive, accessible nation. Thank you for your dedication to this cause, and I hope you enjoy this conference.

All my best,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator