



April 17, 2013

Senator Tom Harkin
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Alexander,

As the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy System and Client Assistance Programs for people with disabilities, the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) would like to express its strong support for the confirmation of Thomas Perez as the next Secretary of the United States Department of Labor. The next Secretary of Labor will play a critical role in addressing the high rate of unemployment and low rate of participation in the labor market that people with disabilities currently face. Mr. Perez has proven himself to be an effective leader and consensus-builder, not just around the rights of people with disabilities as Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Office of Civil Rights, but in the many issues he has worked on.

Mr. Perez has demonstrated his leadership by advancing community integration for people with disabilities in his role as the director of the Civil Rights Division at the United States Department of Justice. He has worked tirelessly to make the *Olmstead* decision a reality in the lives of many people with disabilities.¹ The *Olmstead* decision improved the lives of thousands of people with disabilities by providing them the opportunity for full community integration in their homes, their jobs, and their daily lives. Under Mr. Perez's leadership, the Division reached

¹ See, e.g., Tom Perez, Testimony before the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (June 21, 2012), available at <http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Perez4.pdf> ("I am pleased to testify today about the Civil Rights Division's...active role in ensuring that people with disabilities can realize their full potential.... in *Olmstead*, the Supreme Court recognized for the first time that the civil rights of people with disabilities are violated when they are unnecessarily segregated from the rest of society.... that segregating individuals with disabilities in institutional settings deprives them of the opportunity to participate in their communities, interact with individuals who do not have disabilities and make their own day-to-day choices;....[and] unnecessary institutionalization stigmatizes people with disabilities, reinforcing misunderstanding and negative stereotypes.")

landmark settlement agreements with the states of Virginia, Delaware, and Georgia allowing these states to transition from a heavy reliance on institutional settings to a system focused on individualized and cost-effective community-based services promoting full participation by people with disabilities in community life.

Mr. Perez has been an effective consensus-builder and is able to take a variety of concerns and perspectives into account in crafting workable solutions. He has worked collaboratively with state agencies, private service providers, and disability advocates to ensure appropriate and safe transitions for people with disabilities into community settings.

Tom Perez has been a critical part of the Department of Justice's efforts to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Recently, under Mr. Perez's leadership the Department has filed a Motion to Intervene in *Lane v. Kitzhaber* supporting the right for people with disabilities to pursue employment in integrated settings. When applied in the employment setting, the *Olmstead* decision will advance economic opportunities and independence for people with disabilities.

Tom Perez has the qualifications and experience to make an outstanding Secretary of Labor. Please support his swift confirmation.

Sincerely,



Curt Decker
Executive Director