



**A petition for  
a new law to bring about  
equal rights for disabled people – now!**

We the undersigned welcome the government's announcement to introduce a new Bill to provide equal rights for disabled people and call on ministers to

- (a) consult on the new law at the earliest possible date, so that it can be introduced into Parliament and brought into force no later than 2004;
- (b) use the new law to correct the weaknesses of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as explained on the back of this form).

Name	Address	Signature

- Please return this form to: Equal Rights Department, TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS by 31 October 2003. The completed petition will be presented to the minister.

## Why we need a new disability law and what it needs to do

In 1999, the Disability Rights Task Force set up by the government and including disabled people and representatives of employers and trade unions made 156 recommendations for changes to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The TUC fully supports them. But most have not yet been carried out. The new government Bill is the best opportunity to put these many necessary improvements into practice. *Without these changes, the law remains weak and inadequate: disabled people continue to suffer much discrimination. We believe that the law needs to outlaw ALL unfair discrimination.*

Both the Disability Rights Commission and the TUC believe that the most important changes that need to be made are the following.

- The definition of disability.

The present law allows people who are clearly disabled to be excluded from protection by a narrow and restrictive definition. People with mental health problems are especially badly affected. The definition must be changed to cover everyone who is disabled.

- Remove the exemptions.

The DDA excludes employers of fewer than 15 people from its terms. This is unfair. It also excludes a range of particular jobs. Along with the DRC, we believe that no one should be allowed to discriminate unfairly – the law already allows employers not to take on someone who cannot do the job or would be a risk to themselves or others.

- Create a duty to promote equality.

We don't just want a negative requirement not to discriminate, we want the law to make employers positively promote the idea of equality and the benefits to everyone of diversity.

- Abolish the right to justify discrimination.

The present law allows employers and service providers to justify their discrimination against a disabled person. This is something that is not allowed under any other equality law. We believe that this defence undermines the very purpose of the law and must be removed (and allowed only in the rarest and most clearly defined circumstances).