



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SENATORS INTRODUCE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL TO REQUIRE ACCESS TO FITNESS FACILITIES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

WASHINGTON, DC, - Senators Tammy Duckworth, Bob Casey and Richard Blumenthal introduced the Exercise and Fitness for All Act on April 30, 2019. The Act authorizes the U.S. Access Board, a Federal agency that promotes accessibility, to issue guidelines specifying the number and types of accessible exercise equipment required in a fitness facility and requires the Department of Justice to issue regulations consistent with the Access Board guidelines.

Numerous studies demonstrate that persons with a disability suffer many medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes and circulatory problems that could be prevented or alleviated by exercise. For many persons with a disability the only way they can get exercise is by using an exercise machine. Unfortunately, fitness centers rarely provide exercise machines that are usable by persons with a disability.

Accessible exercise equipment has the following features:

- Cardio machines will give audible instructions to visually impaired users through a headphone on how to use the machine, notify the user when changes are made in speed or incline and give feedback during the course of exercise for speed, time elapsed, distance traveled, incline, heart rate, and calories burned.
- Cardio machines will have a console featuring raised buttons with tactile markings. The console and the buttons will be the same for all cardio machines irrespective of the manufacturer. Once a blind user or a person with an intellectual disability learns how to use one machine, it will be easy to learn how to use other machines.

- There will be a variety of cardio machines that can be operated from a seated position:
 - Machines where only the arms are used;
 - Machines where the arms move the legs or vice versa;
 - Machines with swivel seats to assist with transfer; and
 - Machines with removable seats so that they can be operated from a wheelchair.
- Strength machines will either have no seat or an easily removable seat.
- All adjustment mechanisms to operate a strength machine will be reachable from a seated position.

The introduction date, April 30, is significant to the disability movement because on April 30, 1977, a 25-day occupation of the San Francisco Federal building ended when the government agreed to issue regulations enforcing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Section 504 required programs receiving federal funding to be accessible to persons with a disability and was the first law that treated participation in society by persons with a disability as a civil right. For four years after the law was passed, the government refused to issue regulations enforcing the law. It took a 25-day occupation of the San Francisco federal building by scores of persons with a disability to force the government to issue Section 504 regulations.

It has been 42 years since the Section 504 regulations were issued and almost 29 years since the ADA was signed and, although there has been much progress, persons with disabilities continue to be denied participation in various areas of society. The Exercise and Fitness for All Act will end discrimination by the fitness industry and improve the health of millions of persons with a disability.

For further information, see mobilityfitness.org.