



**FIA MEETINGS
I AM PWD RESOLUTION
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Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about **Inclusion in the Arts and Media for People with Disabilities** – I AM PWD.

Entertainment is our common cultural heritage. From pantomimes performed by the earliest of our ancestors to today's blockbuster movies, our human story is the narrative of our many cultures. The story has played out on theater stages and on cinema screens, televisions, computers and mobile devices.

And it is from these thousands of portrayals that we developed our understanding of each other, the world and our roles in the larger epic of humanity.

Imagine never being a part of those stories.

That's what it's like for people with disabilities.

Estimates from the United States government indicate that more than 20 percent of the population of our country has a disability. But only 2 percent of the characters in films and on television are disabled.

And of the few disabled characters in American television programs and movies, **less than one half of one percent are speaking roles**. And even more challenging, performers with disabilities often compete against each other **and** able-bodied actors for the very few available roles.

That disparity often makes it seem like people with disabilities are invisible in society.

Globally, the World Health Organization estimates that 750 million people have a disability. Their access to work opportunities is equally dismal.

Nearly two years ago, our three performers unions, Screen Actors Guild, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and Actors Equity Association, decided to change that.

Together, we created and launched the I AM PWD campaign for access, inclusion and accuracy for performers with disabilities.

We began this effort at the request of our Tri-union Performers with Disabilities committee because our members – performers across the entertainment spectrum -- wanted action. And we are committed to promoting recognition of their skills, abilities and professionalism. Our members wanted equal access to work opportunities and an equal chance to audition for available jobs. And they want an accurate portrayal of performers with disabilities across all media entertainment.

Achieving these goals is the mandate and the vision of I AM PWD.

Through advocacy within the domestic entertainment industry, legislative activity and a broad public awareness campaign, we hope to increase work opportunities and improve working conditions for performers with disabilities.

Another campaign objective is to work in partnership with performers unions across the globe, so we are especially pleased and proud to announce that our friends and colleagues at the Alliance of Cinema, Television and Radio Artists in Canada, recently joined our effort.

We thank ACTRA President Ferne Downey for her support and participation and look forward to a productive partnership that will result in improvements for performers with disabilities across much of North America.

Our cooperative effort with ACTRA is just the first of what we hope will become many international partnerships dedicated to increasing opportunities for performers with disabilities.

Many of you in the audience today represent countries that make up the 140 nations signed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We hope you will also show your support for performers with disabilities by endorsing our campaign and working with us to broadly expand awareness of performers with disabilities and to encourage hiring of performers with disabilities whenever they can do the job.

The mission is challenging and true success will only come when more performers with disabilities are cast in roles as disabled characters. We will only succeed when movies, television and live theater present a true reflection of the vibrant and dynamic diversity of the global scene.

We know we are not alone and that many of you are also active on behalf of performers with disabilities in your organizations. We stand ready to hear from you about your efforts and to share with you the insights, strategies and tactics of our campaign. We hope to have the opportunity to provide more information on the projects we have undertaken and the progress we have made.

On behalf of the more than 200,000 members of our four organizations, I hope you will support our I AM PWD effort and help advocate for equal rights and access for performers with disabilities across the globe. Thank you.