

Statement of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Evans
October 30, 2007
Before the Committee of the Whole and
The Committee on Human Services
Regarding PR 17-428
“Sense of the Council Regarding Rights and Services for Residents with
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and their Families
Resolution of 2007”

Good morning Chairman Gray, Councilmember Wells, and distinguished Councilmembers. We are Mr. and Mrs. Harold Evans and we are delighted to be here today to testify in support of PR 17-428, the “Sense of the Council Regarding Rights and Services for Residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and their Families Resolution of 2007.”

As you know, our daughter Joy was one of many individuals who once lived at Forest Haven, the District’s public institution for people with developmental disabilities. Joy went to Forest Haven when she was 8. We had no choice but to put our daughter at Forest Haven because she needed 24-hour care, the DC Public Schools would not take her, and there were no programs for her in the community.

Although Forest Haven was recommended to us, what we found after Joy went there was that the conditions were terrible and inhumane. We joined with other parents and families of Forest Haven residents to fight for the rights of our children. When our protests went unheard, we sued the

District. The *Evans* law suit ultimately led the District to shut down Forest Haven permanently in 1991.

During this time, we worked closely with The Arc of the District of Columbia to write a new law to help people leaving Forest Haven. D.C. Law 2-137 was the right law for its time. But it is now nearly 30 years old.

We as parents and advocates firmly believe that today there is a need for a new law to support best practices, better choices, and comprehensive community services for District residents with developmental disabilities and their families. By setting out positive values and principles for how the future should look, PR 17-428 gives us a strong foundation for the new law. We urge the Council to approve this resolution, and offer all of our support and hope for the important work of re-writing D.C. Law 2-137 that is still to come.

Thank you.