

# **The Arc Of The District of Columbia, Inc.**

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**Testimony of Senora D. Simpson, Ph.D.  
President, Board of Directors, The Arc of the District of Columbia  
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 members of the Council of the District of Columbia. I am Senora Simpson and I am the President of the Board of Directors of The Arc of the District of Columbia.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today 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.”

When D.C. Law 2-137 was written, Judge Pratt had recently issued his order requiring the District to serve residents of the former Forest Haven in the least restrictive environment. As Forest Haven began to downsize and eventually close, the intent was for people to receive comprehensive services to live successfully in the community. As a city we have come far, but we still have not reached that vision.

While D.C. Law 2-137 helped people with developmental disabilities move toward community living, new laws are now needed to bring us into the twenty-first century. With new laws, the District should be able to further expand choices for people, offer smaller and more individualized living arrangements, and provide more opportunities for self-determination and inclusion, resulting in higher quality of life.

In addition to providing improved choices and more comprehensive supports, new laws must also reach out to individuals and their families across the life span. In particular, we know that the District's educational system fails to prepare students with disabilities for life as adults. Any new legislation must address this transition period and provide targeted resources for youth with disabilities and their families in a fully integrated, inclusive environment.

Finally, to implement any new laws we must ensure that the people who will actually provide the services are highly qualified and well-trained. At the end of the day, services are only as good as the skills of the people who provide them. A quality workforce is the foundation for all that the District hopes to do to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities, and it is imperative that any new laws address this issue.

In closing, on behalf of The Arc of the District of Columbia and as a parent and advocate for people with disabilities, I would like to thank the Council of the District of Columbia for considering PR 17-428 and to urge you to move swiftly to approve this much-needed resolution.