

L. Thomas Mangrum, Jr.
Testimony before the Council of the District of Columbia,
Committee on Human Services on the
Office on Disability Rights
March 17, 2010

My name is L. Thomas Mangrum, Jr. I am Co-President of Project ACTION!, a self-advocacy group of adults with developmental disabilities. I am on the DC Developmental Disabilities Council which falls under the Office on Disability Rights. I also serve on the First Trinity Lutheran Church Board of Directors, on several DDS committees, and other groups in the community. I am here speaking for the members of Project ACTION! and not just for myself.

The staff from the Office on Disability Rights has been very supportive of Project ACTION!, attending our monthly meetings, bringing resources and information to us and assisting us to be strong self-advocates in the community. They also work with us and other government agencies to fix problems we tell them about.

I also enjoy serving on the DC Developmental Disabilities Council and having an opportunity to create meaningful change for District residents with developmental disabilities.

I'm very active in my neighborhood and community. I serve on many boards and committees, I'm active in my faith community; Faith Temple, and I support my mother who lives in a senior home in Maryland. I'm usually very surprised at how many DC sidewalks and curb-cuts are not accessible for people who use wheelchairs. With all the construction that is being done in our city, many of the sidewalks are passable by our wheelchairs and we often are forced into the streets to get to where we were going. This is dangerous for us and drivers. This is an issue I have discussed in the past with the staff of the DD Council and the DC CIL. We met with the DC Dept. of Transportation and they conducted a tour of my neighborhood and the streets that I had told them I had problems with. I do not see any improvements on the streets yet.

I travel on a weekly basis to the New York Avenue Metro and on 6th Street, NE, I'm forced to ride on the street to the Metro.

Many of the street and signal lights have not been moved to allow people with wheelchairs to move around them to stay on the sidewalk, but have to move to the street instead. Many of the streets in my neighborhood have the curb cuts at one end of the street but at the other end of the street there isn't one to allow you to get to the street.

The Dept. of Public Works needs to do a better job maintaining the streets because potholes and uneven bricks can cause the wheelchair to tip over and cause a serious accident.

People need equal access to the community and the lack of accessible streets limits our access to fully participate in the District of Columbia.

I appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you today.

Thank you.