

Testimony of Ricardo Thornton Sr.  
Performance Oversight Hearing for the DC Office of Disability Rights  
at the Committee on Government Operations and the Environment  
Mary M. Cheh, Chairperson

Good day, Chairperson Cheh and members of the Government Operations Committee. My name is Ricardo Thornton. I am Co-Vice President of Project ACTION!, a District of Columbia self-advocacy coalition whose members are several hundred adults with developmental disabilities. I serve on the DC Developmental Disabilities State Planning Council, have been on the Board of the Quality Trust and serve on several other boards. My wife and I and my brother are former residents of Forest Haven. We all live in Ward 4 and work in the District. I am here to testify on behalf of Project ACTION!.

The Office of Disability Rights has been very supportive of Project ACTION! and our members. They have attended most of our monthly Project ACTION! meetings, so that they can hear directly about the issues that our members face. They have helped individual members solve problems and have helped everyone in the city by working to make sure that buildings, taxicabs, and opportunities are accessible to people with all kinds of disabilities. Until ODR was created, we didn't have a single place where we could go with questions and issues. They also keep us informed about events and resources that are available to us at our meetings, which is important since most of our members don't have computers or other ways like that to learn about things that are happening.

As someone who lived in an institution, I also think that it's great that we finally have an Olmstead Plan to ensure that people are never in places like Forest Haven – and that people have alternatives in the community to institutions, nursing homes and residential schools.

ODR plays a very important role in our city and in our lives. Our thanks go to the City Council and the Mayor for creating ODR and for continuing to support it.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
Ricardo Thornton  
Co-Vice-President  
Project ACTION!