

**Statement of James R. Cumberpatch**  
**September 18, 1998**

My name is James R. Cumberpatch.

My youngest son is Joseph Cumberpatch. He is 35 years old and is mentally retarded with Down's Syndrome.

My wife and I had seven children, six boys and one girl. When Joseph was born in 1962, I was in the Air Force. I was working long hours at the Pentagon in the Air Force Office of Congressional Liaison. This put a heavy burden on my wife who did a fantastic job of taking care of Joseph and the other children. She was even able to inspire in the older children (ages 16, 13 and 10) a desire to help take care of Joseph and teach him many things.

Three years later, in 1965, our oldest son was killed in Vietnam. After this, I realized that I could not give my wife the support she deserved to help take care of Joseph and also pursue a military career involving long working hours and separations. I therefore retired from the Air Force.

I founded a small corporation in Kingsington, Maryland, which I operated as president until I retired again in 1997 at 75 years of age.

When Joseph as about nine years old he entered Concord School, in Potomac, MD, a public elementary school for retarded children. This was a wonderful school with small classes and a great deal of individual attention. My wife continued to give Joseph continuous instruction and encouragement in living skills. We also took him to all the Special Olympics activities for which he was eligible. Between Concord School and my wife's teaching, Joseph developed fairly well for a Down Syndrome child.

During these years my wife spent tremendous amounts of time teaching and caring for Joseph plus trying to spend adequate time with the other children.

In 1983, Joseph started working at the Centers for the Handicapped, now known as CHI Centers, Inc., in Silver spring, Md. This agency supports a large number of seriously retarded and physically impaired clients. The Center provides meaningful and satisfying work for its clients such that their self-esteem and happiness are greatly enhanced. It is a wonderful place. Joseph still works there.

We have bene fortunate that for many years Joseph has had someplace to go during business hours on Mondays thru Fridays. However, someone always had to be with him in the evenings and on weekends.

We did not have any trouble obtaining medical services for Joseph. The state of Maryland has a Medical Assistance Program that provides for al of his medical and dental needs. It is a very user-friendly program.

Our next-to youngest child, Mark, graduated from college and left home in 1982. Whereas most couples have earned full freedom after all of their children have been raised and left home, we would have to take care of Joseph for the rest of our lives. This was going to be a big job because Joseph is, in most ways, the equivalent of a three- to six-year old.

I am sure that such a situation could put a terrible strain on many marriages. However, my wife was a wonderfully considerate and generous person and never once complained about Joseph. She considered Joseph to be a little angel that she had bene entrusted to care for.

So, from 1982 to 1988, we took care of Joseph. Fortunately, our grown children also helped. For example, my wife and I finally took a trip to Hawaii in 1986 to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Our daughter and son-in-law, Robert Durbin, took care of Joseph for ten days. In those days we could not leave Joseph alone overnight. This trip to Hawaii was the longest time that my wife and I had been away alone together since Joseph was born.

In 1988, my wife was diagnosed with cancer and died a few months later. She was 64 years of age.

After this, Joseph and I continued to live in our house in Kinsington. Joseph continued to work at the CHI, Inc., and I ran my business from my basement so that I would be there when Joseph returned from work. When I traveled on business, Joseph would stay at my daughter's house. My son-in-law often takes Joseph to play basketball or to sports events. My sons, Thomas and Michael who live in Annapolis, often take Joseph to the Mall and to cook-outs at their homes. My son Mark, who lives in Baltimore, takes Joseph to Orioles games. Joseph is a rabid Orioles fan.

Although I would be with Joseph in the evenings and on weekends, I worried about him spending so much time alone in front of a television set.

During the mid-90's, it seemed that I was either working or taking care of Joseph. I seemed unable to develop a social life. In 1995 I was diagnosed with a manic-depression condition and put on fairly heavy medication. Phasing down my business was also very depressing to me, but I knew I had to retire soon. I was now 73 years of age.

In 1983, my wife and I had put Joseph on the State of Maryland "waiting list" for residential services for Joseph. There were many people on the list and we did not think that we had a chance to get help. However, in 1997-1998, the ARC of Maryland started a program called with "Waiting List Initiative" that would provide services for an increased number of retarded citizens. This was good news because it meant that Joseph might be able to have a home of his own with companionable roommates.

The governor of Maryland budgeted a large sum of money for this program and the legislature passed it unanimously in early 1998.

In May 1998, Joseph was selected by the ARC of Montgomery County to move into one of their new residential homes for retarded citizens. Joseph moved into his new home on August 21, 1998.

Joseph loves his new home. His two roommates have worked with him at the CHI Centers for many years and they are good friends of his. He now has great companionship and friends to talk to. He had a good staff caregiver and sits down to these meals with his friends in the dining room. The benefits to Joseph are tremendous. He brags to everybody that he now has his own house, "just like my brothers." It is a great source of pride to him.

The funds provided by the Maryland governor and legislature will benefit a large number of retarded citizens and their families. This is a highly cost-effective program. Most of these retarded citizens receive a monthly SSI check for about \$450.00 and earn about \$100.00 per month. Except for a personal allowance of about \$120.00, this money is used to help defray the room and board costs of the home. So the program is practically self-funded. So every group home gives great benefit to three families (parents and siblings) and three retarded citizens. That is why I say it is a highly cost-effective program.

In the meantime, I seem to have recovered from my manic-depression and no longer take medication. Also, I have a sense of freedom that I have not had for many years. I am sorry that my wife did not live

to feel that same freedom with me and to see Joseph so well situated and happy.

And finally, I no longer have to worry about what would happen to Joseph if I were to get sick or die. I as always afraid that my children might inherit this responsibility. They all have spouses and small children of their own, and such a thing should be an unfair and heavy burden.

However, the greatest beneficiaries of this wonderful program are the retarded citizens that it serves. It puts them into the mainstream of life and provides them with a happy and healthy home of their own, "just like their brothers (or sisters)!"