

**Public Testimony**

**Zoning Hearing: CASE NO. 02-38J**

**Development for 1000 4th Street S.W.**

**January 31, 2019**

**Grace Hu, Amidon-Bowen Elementary School PTA, Southwest DC Resident**

Good evening, my name is Grace Hu. I am a resident of Southwest DC, the chair of parent advocacy for the Amidon-Bowen Elementary PTA, and a former member of the Amidon-Bowen Local School Advisory Team.

For the past three years I have had the honor of working with other parents—some of whom are here tonight—to support Amidon-Bowen and to rally the Southwest community behind our neighborhood school. After experiencing decreasing enrollment and being labeled one of the bottom 40 DC public schools years ago, our school is on the rise. Our test scores are increasing, our principal has recruited and retained excellent teachers, and more SWDC families are choosing or at least considering Amidon-Bowen. But while Amidon-Bowen has made significant improvements, it is still in a fragile state. Every year we fight for resources from DC Public Schools, and young families in SWDC are paying attention to see what happens with our school the next few years. It is within this context that I would like to highlight the potential negative impacts of PN Hoffman’s decision to lease space to AppleTree charter school.

Under the current funding model for DC Public Schools, school budgets are largely determined by student enrollment. This means the number of students in a school help determine how many staff positions and other resources are allotted to a school. For the past few years, Amidon-Bowen’s enrollment has been stable at around 350 students. If a charter school in the neighborhood were to draw students from the school, it would negatively impact the resources provided to the school and jeopardize the education of the remaining students. The prospect of losing funding is particularly troubling because Amidon-Bowen serves a high-need population, with over 70% students being at risk and over 20% needing special education services. National statistics show that charter schools serve fewer students with disabilities than traditional public schools, which means it’s possible that the loss of students to the charter system could lead to an

even greater concentration of students with special needs at Amidon-Bowen (as other students go elsewhere while those needing special services remain at Amidon-Bowen).

I am not here to debate the merits of charter versus traditional public schools, but I do believe that it is unrealistic to think that locating a charter school near our neighborhood school will not have an impact.

Additionally, we understand that AppleTree discourages its students from attending neighborhood (aka traditional public) schools once they've graduated from Pre-Kindergarten. Last week an AppleTree enrollment staff person told me that AppleTree has partnerships with other charter schools and these charter schools actively recruit AppleTree PreK students to continue their K-12 education at charter schools. This approach by AppleTree is in direct conflict with our desire to build up and invest in our Southwest neighborhood schools.

Had PN Hoffman consulted with our school community before agreeing to sign a lease with AppleTree, we would have pointed out the fragile and complicated nature of education in DC and our Southwest community. What message will it send to PN Hoffman and other developers if we allow them to make decisions impacting our community institutions without consulting us? If indeed PN Hoffman's lease with AppleTree is a done deal, I urge you to demand that they provide some kind of compensation to mitigate the potential negative impacts on our neighborhood school.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.