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December 10, 2015

Chair Marnique Heath
Board of Zoning Adjustment
1100 4th Street, SW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20024
bzsubmissions@dc.gov

VIA E-MAIL

Re: Opposition to BZA Case No. 19133

Dear Chair Heath and Members of the Board:

I write to oppose and express my concern over the application before the Board of Zoning Adjustment regarding 1772 Church Street NW, BZA Case Number 19133.

I have followed this project very closely since February 2014, when St. Thomas and its developer, CAS Riegler, released their initial plans. For example, I have attended numerous ANC and community meetings, met with members of the Historic Preservation Office, attended and testified at hearing(s) before the Historic Preservation Review Board, and participated in meetings between the neighbors, developer, and church convened by Councilmember Jack Evans. After much thought, I regrettably can neither support this project nor the variance they seek.

In plain terms, the project is simply too big for the 1700 block of Church street. The plans are not consistent with either the Dupont Circle Historic District or the Dupont Circle Zoning Overlay district. Rather than striving for compatibility, the proposed plans before BZA are completely out of character, overshadowing the surrounding buildings and interrupting the rhythm of what is otherwise a narrow, quiet one-way street. The additional lot occupancy and proposed variance would only make the project worse. The relief sought would cause substantial detriment to the public good while conflicting with and impairing the purpose of the Dupont Circle Historic District and Dupont Circle Zoning Overlay. This is particularly true with respect to the immediate neighbors, who will lose the Overlay's protections over, e.g., "backyards ... light, air, and privacy...." Applicants seek approval for more space on a residential and church complex so massive that it already soars above the neighbors' homes in a way the historic church never did.

An overwhelming number of neighbors and relevant associations agree. Indeed, the recent ANC 2B testimony of the Dupont Circle Citizens Association and the Church Street Neighbors are clear

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evidence in that regard—as is the ANC’s vote and Councilmember Evan’s letter strongly opposing the variance.

There is a better way for the Applicants to proceed while still respecting the integrity of this Historic District and the interests of the neighbors. For these reasons, we ask for your support in opposing the current plans.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christopher T. Blackford

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