

Testimony of Elizabeth Meltzer (5006 Piney Branch Rd NW) and/or John Giles (1501 Gallatin St NW)

Good morning commissioners. We are two neighbors of the 5000 14th Street NW property, and proposed future site of LAMB. Elizabeth and her daughter live at 5006 Piney Branch Rd, NW and John Giles and his wife (Chunmeng Bai) and three young children live at 1501 Gallatin St NW. We are on located across from the Northwest corner of the property on opposite sides of the intersection of Gallatin St NW and Piney Branch Rd NW.

Traffic and Congestion. We feel that the traffic study commissioned by the Applicant and approved by DDOT is deficient in some important ways. This does not reflect any fault on the consultants hired to design the study or DDOT, but reflects the parameters they were provided and the scope of the study.

We are both very concerned about the likely increase in traffic along Piney Branch Rd NW. Traffic along Piney Branch, and likely congestion and backups at Piney Branch and Gallatin St NW, were not considered in the traffic study commissioned by the Applicants (Building Hope and LAMB). We believe this to be a serious deficiency in the study, and feel that any plans to allow entry or exit of vehicles on Piney Branch during morning drop off or afternoon pick up from the rear exits of the 5000 14th Street NW property will have significant detrimental effects on the community.

Piney Branch is an unimproved road with no pedestrian walkways, no parking lanes in either direction and is frequently restricted to one lane of travel with cars parked along it. Nonetheless, for students traveling from north and east of Kingsbury in the morning windows, GPS systems set to 1501 Farragut St NW

(which is across from the rear entrance to Kingsbury) highlight a path down Colorado St NW to Piney Branch and to the rear of Kingsbury as the best route to the school. (See the attached screen shot of a map from Google Maps taken at 8:13 AM on November 13, 2017). This deficiency in the traffic study suggests that parents in a hurry in the morning are very likely to choose expedited travel along this narrow and unimproved road.

We are heartened by a “recommendation” in the ANC letter that the Piney Branch entrance only be used for staff at both the morning and evening, but are worried that “recommendations” do not bind LAMB or any other occupant to a specific behavior.

Further, even all entry and exit occurs through the front entrance on 14th Street NW, it is very difficult to anticipate how all additional traffic in the morning rush will flow into the neighborhood. With south bound commuters backed up at the 14th street light or the left turn onto Gallatin from 16th street, many will consult GPS-based technology and still choose a short cut down Piney Branch to Gallatin in the morning. In short, the “general equilibrium” effects of a dramatic increase in traffic are an unknown.

For this reason, we strongly urge the BZA to follow the Office of Planning’s recommendations that:

- The maximum number of LAMB students in the interim stage will be 310 with a maximum number of faculty/staff of 36.
- Once Kingsbury departs from the property, LAMB submit a new proposal to the BZA to consider expanding the student population to 600.

- LAMB shall also submit details of the gymnasium to the BZA for review prior to construction either as part of the review for the expansion to 600, or as a modification to the interim approval for LAMB.

As the Applicant is requesting a 500 percent increase in the student population at the Kingsbury property, there is really no ability to project whether the transportation arrangements will work or how closely they will be adhered to. We believe that a future review with expansion of the commuting student population (as Kingsbury students tend to be bussed), provides appropriate incentives for LAMB to institutionalize arrangements that could limit impact on the immediate neighbor. Further, the phase in time provides adequate opportunity for all of us to learn whether hypothetical transportation management measures work in practice at a lower scale.

Parents and Administrators of Today and the Future

We have no doubt parents of LAMB students living three to eight blocks from the 5000 14th Street NW location stand to gain considerably if and when the school moves to this location, and this is reflected in the many letters of support you have received from LAMB parents.

We also appreciate the earnestness with which a few parents have attempted to address our concerns over traffic congestion. One problem for us, however, is that after devising the transportation plan, many LAMB parents tend to treat our transportation congestion concerns as a now settled issue, or come up with anecdotal evidence on traffic from a day when they happened to be riding by. We live at this intersection and experience the traffic every day as we leave on our morning commutes. Some days it can be relatively light and on others it is not.

And this is before a 500+ percent expansion in the commuting population at the property currently occupied by Kingsbury.

We feel it important to remember that LAMB's well-intentioned transportation plan remains an untested hypothetical at the 5000 14th Street NW location. Further, the parents living in nearby areas of Ward 4 are not representative of the parents who must commute to the school. Commuters may be given a transportation plan, but choosing to follow it prior to arriving at the school gate reflects an individual decision outside the control of our earnest and well-meaning neighbors.

Finally, it is worth remembering that current parents (or school administrators) writing letters of support cannot themselves constrain or commit future parents. A parent with a third grader will no longer be involved with the school in two to three years. Even parents with new pre-K3 students will only be at the school for eight years. Those of us with standing and living on the perimeter of the property (5000 14th Street NW) will all be in our homes long after they have moved on to other schools. They simply cannot commit future cohorts of parents (or future school administrators) to be "nice" to the neighbors as transportation patterns evolve.

We believe that with the right incentives, institutions and norms can be developed. For this reason, we strongly urge that the BZA follow recommendations of the Office of Planning in taking a stepped approach to the proposed expansion of the LAMB student population from 310 over the interim period to 600 after Kingsbury ceases to operate at the location. This will provide time for the community, the Office of Planning and the BZA to

determine whether procedures to mitigate congestion are well-implemented and institutionalized.

Annex A – Best Route to Piney Branch Entrance to Kingsbury from Points North East
Reproduced from Google Maps at 8:13 AM on November 13

