

**TESTIMONY OF
MAHDI SHABAZZ
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
THE H.E.L.P. FOUNDATION, INC.**

**IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION OF
ABDO DEVELOPMENT, LLC and
THE PRESIDENT AND TRUSTEES
OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA**

**BEFORE THE OFFICE OF ZONING
OCTOBER 5, 2009**

Good Evening. My name is Theodora H. Brown, Esquire, and I serve as a consultant to the H.E.L.P. Foundation, and appear before you on behalf of Mr. Mahdi Shabazz, the Chief Executive Officer of The H.E.L.P. Foundation, who is recovering from the flu and unable to testify tonight. The H.E.L.P. Foundation supports the application of Abdo Development, LLC and the President and Trustees of the Catholic University of America.

Let me begin my testimony tonight by offering some background information about the organization. The Helping Everybody Live Prosperously (H.E.L.P.) Foundation, Inc. was founded in 2006 and established offices in the Edgewood neighborhood of Ward 5 here in the District of Columbia. The mission of the organization is to improve family self-sufficiency and standard of living through innovative training, education, employment, health, and links to community development programs. Additionally, the Foundation promotes community service as a lifelong pursuit through opportunities for family and extended family involvement in community building and other civic activities.

The Foundation invests in the potential of the families it serves, particularly focusing on youth as the key component of family and community revitalization. Toward this end, the Foundation has built relationships with a variety of local businesses, government agencies, schools, and civic organizations committed to empowering youth and families to be healthy, productive and engaged citizens. Essentially, the H.E.L.P. Foundation serves as a catalyst of change that helps young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy life choices, and improve their communities.

Specifically, the H.E.L.P. Foundation has played a major role in transforming youth in the Edgewood and surrounding neighborhoods. As you may know, these areas have high rates of teen pregnancy, juvenile deaths, drug abuse and

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arrests for violent crimes. The H.E.L.P. Foundation has provided structured activities to these youth, that promote self-sufficiency through job skills development and preparation, shadowing and job related activities, with a particular focus on teen runaways and those who are aging out of the foster care system.

Moreover, the H.E.L.P. Foundation provides financial assistance to low-income families through rental, energy, food, and emergency/disaster assistance. It is currently building capacity to offer HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, case management, drug prevention, drug treatment referral, GED preparation, and foreign language classes.

The H.E.L.P. Foundation strongly urges the ^{Commission} ~~Zoning Board~~ to approve the application of Abdo Development, LLC and the President and Trustees of the Catholic University of America and its consolidated planned unit development to construct more than 800 residential units and up to 85,000 square feet of retail space. The H.E.L.P. Foundation believes that approval of their application and completion of the construction project will accomplish the following: 1) provide jobs for neighborhood residents, 2) increase the economic vitality of the neighborhoods, 3) offer additional and much needed retail services to all of the surrounding neighborhoods (and the District of Columbia as a whole), and 4) create a sense of safety with the additional pedestrian traffic in the area. The H.E.L.P. Foundation intends to work with the Applicant to ensure that their stated commitment of connecting to and the revitalization of the neighborhoods surrounding the subject area is fulfilled, which commitment is aligned with the mission and goals of the Foundation. The H.E.L.P. Foundation is particularly encouraged and inspired by the desire of the President and Trustees of Catholic University to “connect” the University to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of Mr. Mahdi Shabazz, Chief Executive Officer of The H.E.L.P. Foundation in support of the application of Abdo Development, LLC and the President and Trustees of the Catholic University of America. I am available to answer any questions you may have about my testimony tonight or the work of The H.E.L.P. Foundation.



"Helping Everybody Live Prosperously"

SAVE OUR CHILDREN, SAVE OUR COMMUNITY

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