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March 2, 2000

Sheila Cross Reid, Chair
Board of Zoning Adjustment
Government of the District of Columbia
One Judiciary Square, Suite 210
441 Fourth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Re: Application No. 16556

Dear Ms. Reid:

We are attorneys who have lived, owned a house, and paid taxes in the District since 1983, and have been parents since 1987. In early 1995, we were strongly considering moving out of the District because of our dissatisfaction with the D.C. public school system, to which our older daughter, then in second grade, had been entrusted since kindergarten. But we have not moved, and have no plans to move. The reason for this is the Jewish Primary Day School. Our older daughter graduated from JPDS last June, our middle child now attends 4th grade there, and we hope to enroll our youngest in kindergarten there this fall.

Until this past year, JPDS was a part of Adas Israel Congregation. However, the School became independent this past summer, and this coming summer Adas Israel will be reclaiming the space presently occupied by the School for other uses. The School has not yet secured property for or sufficient funds to construct a permanent facility at a new location, and therefore is seeking approval from the BZA pursuant to Application No. 16556 to relocate for a three-year period in two synagogues on 16th Street, Ohev Sholom Talmud Torah Congregation at 7712 16th Street, NW and Tifereth Israel Congregation at 7701 16th Street, NW. We urge the BZA to give expeditious and favorable consideration to the School's application.

JPDS is an extraordinary institution. The students know it, the parents know it, the faculty knows it. We want our younger children educated there. We would be very disappointed were the D.C. government to take actions that force it to shut down or to relocate outside of the City. As a former headmistress yourself, you appreciate the importance of schools to their communities. While we are aware that some members of the Shepherd Park and Colonial Village communities do not welcome what they seem to perceive as the intrusion of another school into their neighborhood, we do not imagine that the BZA has ever received a zoning application for a school that did not engender some degree of local anxiety and opposition. We understand that D.C. law contemplates the location of schools in residential neighborhoods. Having a

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presumption in favor of location of schools in residential neighborhoods is surely sound public policy. Without good schools for its children, the District cannot thrive.

JPDS, and Ohev Sholom Talmud Torah and Tifereth Israel Congregations, are committed to work with the community to mitigate and to offset any inconveniences that the School might bring with it. If there is a need for flexibility, we are sure that that flexibility is there. For example, the application before you provides for 205 students, 14% greater than current enrollment at JPDS, and 32 staffers. Because of the need to file an application in time to secure a hearing date in March, these figures were arrived at prior to conducting traffic studies or commencing neighborhood consultations. We sincerely hope that the School's application is not denied outright in circumstances where minor adjustments could overcome any well-founded objections. However, we emphasize that time is of the essence, so an iterative, "back to the drawing board" process is not an option for the School.

JPDS is an asset to the District. We believe that it will also prove to be an asset to Shepherd Park and Colonial Village during the time that it operates there. Susan Koss, the head of JPDS, has said that she expects that, when the time comes for the School to leave its temporary 16th Street home, there will be sadness, because the School will have had some very good times there. We fully expect that, when that time comes, many neighbors of Ohev Sholom Talmud Torah and Tifereth Israel will also regret the departure of an institution that they had come to appreciate and admire.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Ben Finkelstein

Anita J. Finkelstein

cc: Council Chair Linda W. Cropp
Councilmember Harold Brazil
Councilmember David A. Catania
Councilmember Charlene Drew Jarvis
Councilmember Phil Mendelson
Councilmember Kathleen Patterson
Councilmember Carol Schwartz
Andrew Altman, Director, Office of Planning