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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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March 5, 2000

Sheila Cross Reid, Chair
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Application No. 16556

Dear Ms. Reid:

We are residents of the Shepherd Park neighborhood in the District of Columbia who are writing to support the application of the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nations Capital (JPDS) before the Board of Zoning. JPDS has asked for a Special Exception to allow it to occupy temporary space in two synagogues, Tifereth Israel and Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah, located at 7701 and 7712 Sixteenth Street, NW, respectively, for a period not to exceed three years. When we moved to the Washington area from the Midwest in the fall of 1995, we chose to send our two children to JPDS in Cleveland Park. Not long thereafter, we chose, against all advice, to purchase our present home in the District primarily due to the presence in Shepherd Park of the two synagogues, and the relatively easy access from there to Cleveland Park. We have never regretted our decision to live in the District. The reasons for this are JPDS, Tifereth Israel and Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah.

Our older child graduated from JPDS last June, and our younger child now attends 5th grade there. Until this past year, JPDS was a part of Adas Israel Congregation, however, the School became independent last summer, and this coming summer Adas Israel will be reclaiming the space presently occupied by the School for other uses. JPDS 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 to Ohev Sholom Talmud Torah and Tifereth Israel. We urge the BZA to quickly approve JPDS' application.

Ohev Sholom Talmud Torah and Tifereth Israel, the two large synagogues located at those addresses, have been fixtures on upper 16th Street NW for over forty years. The temporary use of the existing space in those synagogues for a religious-based school is consistent with the use of these buildings as houses of worship and religious instruction. Both buildings are underused as measured by their large size and the decrease in membership from their historic highs. The few additional cars of school parents and staff will add very little to the existing traffic in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the School and the two synagogues are committed to make every effort to minimize the impact of the School on the neighborhood.

BZA
Case No. 16556
Exhibit No. 185

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16556
EXHIBIT NO.185

JPDS is an extraordinary institution. The students know it, the parents know it, and the faculty knows it. We want our younger child to complete her elementary education there, and 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 our neighborhood do not welcome what they perceive as the intrusion of another school into the 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. Furthermore, we have been grateful for the expressions of support that we, and other JPDS parents in Shepherd Park, have received from a great number of our neighbors. We understand that D.C. law contemplates the location of schools in residential neighborhoods. Having a 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 is an asset to the District, and we believe that it will also prove to be an asset to our neighborhood during the time that it operates here. 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,

Francesca Kranzberg

Francesca Kranzberg

Joshua Kranzberg

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, Dir., Office of Planning
ANC 4A Chair, Joseph Hairston, 4A03
Commissioner Douglas Sloan, 4A01
Commissioner Jourdinia S. Brown, 4A02
Commissioner Riddick Vann, 4A04
Commissioner Judith Anderson, 4A05
Commissioner Paula Pyne-Hebron, 4A06
Commissioner John Chagnon, 4A07
Commissioner James H. Jones, 4A08