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March 9, 2000

Hon. Sheila Cross Reid, Chair
Board of Zoning Authority
441 Fourth Street, N.W.
Suite 210S
Washington, D.C. 20001

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Re: Application No. 16556

Dear Madam Chair:

I am a member of the above law firm, a long time business and employer in the District of Columbia. I also am a twenty-five year resident of the District of Columbia, having lived here in the city all of my adult life, including the last eighteen years at 3604 Livingston, N.W. My daughter, who was born at George Washington hospital, is a proud native of Washington, D.C. I write in SUPPORT of the above application.

As you probably are by now aware, the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital (JPDS-NC) is the only Jewish day school in the District of Columbia. As such, it serves a vital interest to this city. Without it, Jewish residents of the District of Columbia are left bereft of a single option or choice for a parochial school for their children. Obviously, this is important to me personally, but it also is important to me as an employer and a tax payer concerned with the future and vitality of this city. I have heard young professionals speak of JPDS-NC's presence in the District of Columbia, and how this was a critical factor in their decision to purchase a home (and pay taxes) in, this city. Otherwise, they lament, they will have to move to the Maryland and Virginia suburbs – where they will have the same options other couples have with respect to parochial schools – causing more commuters and eroding our tax base. One of the greatest treasures of our city is its diversity, but without a single Jewish day school here there will be a gaping hole in that patchwork of different cultures, races and religions.

Therefore, I respectfully submit, it is in the best interests of the District of Columbia to grant the above application, giving JPDS-NC a *limited, temporary* home pending construction of its permanent home, if the appropriate zoning standards are met. I also respectfully submit that those standards, indeed, have been met.

JPDS-NC is a small school (currently 180 students). I understand that in the above application, the school has agreed to cap its enrollment during its temporary stay, to 205 students, although certainly based on the school's growth in prior years it could have expected to exceed this voluntary cap; as indicated, the demand for a Jewish day school in the District of Columbia is great.

BZA
Case No. 16556
Exhibit No. 237

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16556
EXHIBIT NO.237

As verified and documented by field studies of traffic experts (one firm who conducted the studies and a second, separate one who reviewed the data), the vehicular traffic the school does, and reasonably could be expected to, generate is minimal, particularly in the context of 16th Street, which is a major corridor street. Moreover, because the school would be located in two buildings across 16th Street, this will further reduce the (minimal) traffic and effect on the east and west sides of the street and surrounding neighborhoods. Nevertheless, JPDS-NC has commissioned a traffic plan from the traffic experts which will keep vehicular traffic on 16th street and the major arteries, thereby mitigating significantly the (already minimal) effect of the temporary site on this neighborhood.

I attended the ANC meeting where this traffic plan was presented to the Commissioners. I listened intently, but did not hear a single specific (or for that matter, even general) criticism directed to the particulars of this traffic plan, although the stated purpose of this meeting was to consider the traffic plan. The leading speaker on behalf of those opposed to the above application stated only that he needed up to six months to dissect the plan to determine if there *might be* some problem with this very straightforward plan. I was distressed by the fact that this speaker, who I understand was contacted about the above application by the applicant before or at about the time of its filing, did not a attend a single one of the numerous community meetings held by JPDS-NC to listen to and address any neighborhood concerns, including input with respect to the traffic plan. In fact, however, there is considerable support *in the neighborhood* for the above application, as was expressed at the ANC meeting.

Finally, I noted with interest when a close-in neighbor to the site, to demonstrate a point she was making about school traffic, in general, stated that she had first hand experience, because she works, drives to and parks at a school in a heavily trafficked northwest D.C. neighborhood. The neighborhood in question is *my* neighborhood. I raise this not to assert that this woman was hypocritical, but rather to highlight that we all are members of the larger community. Just as she leaves her Shepherd Park neighborhood to commute and park in the mornings and afternoons through my neighborhood, so too do I drive through and park in other neighborhoods in this city to work, go to theater, restaurants, etc. We live in an urban area and that is a part of the urban experience. No doubt, our zoning process has contributed in no small measure to making Washington, D.C. one of the most beautiful, and yet vibrant, cities in the world. It will not remain so, however, under a zero growth/zero change policy. Accordingly, it respectfully is submitted that the above application, limited in time and scope and in compliance with prevailing zoning rules and regulations, should be granted.

Sincerely,

Marsha G. Gentner

cc: Hon. Kathy Patterson
Hon. Charlene Drew Jarvis (via fax)
Councilmembers at Large (Hon. Linda Cropp, Hon. Harold Brazil, Hon. David Catania, Hon. Phil Mendelson, Hon. Carol Schwartz)
Andrew Altman, Office of Planning (via fax)