Testimony by
Stanley M. Cohen

on behalf of Application 16556 by the
Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital

presented to the
Board of Zoning Adjustment
of the District of Columbia

March 15, 2000

BZA
CASE No. 16556
EXHIBIT No. 328

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Madam Chairperson and Members of the Board,

I'm Stanley M. Cohen. I live at 3108 Brooklawn Terrace in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Thank you for this opportunity to support the application of the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital. We are fortunate that this school exists and that we are able to send our six-year-old daughter there.

JPDS offers a unique educational experience in the District of Columbia. Its special curriculum provides our daughter and her schoolmates with basic knowledge and the values of good citizenship as Americans. It also builds the foundation of a life-long pride in Jewish heritage -- and imparts and reinforces ethical values that are important to our family.

I am here not only as a JPDS parent and Board member, but as a property owner who resides four doors from a large private school.

In many of its characteristics, my neighborhood is similar to the Shepherd Park neighborhood in which JPDS seeks to locate temporarily.

The school at the end of my block is the elementary branch of the French International School, located at the corner of Woodbine Street and Beach Drive, less than a mile from the District line. My street, which dead-ends at the school's parking lot, is racially and religiously mixed and contains families of all ages, including retired persons.

This branch of the French school has some 400 pupils in

Grades 1 through 5. Virtually none live in the immediate neighborhood or walk to school. Rather, they commute by dozens of private automobiles and school buses from throughout the Greater Washington area. Many of the cars are from the District.

Traffic begins arriving at the school before 8 a.m. and peaks between 8:15 and 8:30. At that time it takes a minute or so longer to exit my street.

The school's parking lot has a one-way driveway with 25 marked parking spaces. These are occupied by staff. Before school buses arrive, parents are permitted to unload their children--but not park--in the driveway. Once the buses arrive, no other traffic is permitted there. Stopping is also prohibited on Beach Drive, a major thoroughfare. Thus, private cars must unload children at the curb on Woodbine Street or on my street; or parents must park briefly and walk their children to the school. I have never heard a complaint from neighbors about the school's traffic impeding their passage or blocking their driveways.

While teachers and pupils are arriving, many residents are out walking their dogs, jogging or pushing baby carriages along streets without sidewalks. Many local children are walking to pick-up points for buses to other schools. No one is hindered or endangered by the French school's traffic.

During afternoon pickup, most of us are at work. By the time we return, our neighborhood is one of peace and quiet.

The school has not had a negative impact on real estate

values or the sale of homes. Recently a home three doors from the school sold for $685,000. A couple of years ago the home across from the school sold for more than $500,000. These prices are high for my block.

Our neighborhood likes having a school at that location. Last year when a false rumor circulated that the French school might be leaving, the citizens' association urged Montgomery County, which owns the property, to again lease it to a school rather than use the space for other purposes.

The school has proven to be a good neighbor. It is used for our community's annual Halloween party, as a polling station for elections, and for evening meetings of the citizens' association.

I am convinced that the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital can be as good a neighbor in Shepherd Park as the French International School is in my neighborhood. I hope JPDS is given that opportunity. Thank you.