App. # 16556

March 23, 2000

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

'00 APR -5 P3:24

OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Dear Sir or Madam

On March 21 I testified before the Board of Zoning Adjustment in opposition to the Jewish Primary Day School's application for a special exception under Section 206. I kept my testimony very brief that evening because of the number of witnesses and the lateness of the hour. I would like to amplify on my testimony and flesh out my opposition for the record.

My family and I were members of Tifereth Israel for twenty years. My three children all had their bar mitzvahs at the synagogue. Though we are no longer members, we still attend High Holiday services at Tifereth Israel every year. Which is why I find it particularly difficult to witness the behavior of Rabbi Seidel and the board of Tifereth Israel in pursuing this action. Their arrogance and disregard for the wishes of the neighborhood is shameful and unworthy of a religious institution. When you drive down the 1400 block of Juniper Street and see house after house with a sign in front protesting the relocation of JPDS, any reasonable person would ask "Why, in the face of such enormous neighborhood opposition, is Tifereth Israel (and Ohev Shalom) pushing so hard for this move?" The answer, I believe, is that it is a desperate attempt to keep two failing synagogues afloat. Ohev Shalom has been in steady decline since we moved to the neighborhood in 1975. Tifereth, a once thriving institution, has in the last ten years lost many young families to other synagogues, primarily Adas Israel. The influx of 200 primary school aged children would be an enormous financial benefit to both synagogues, but more important is the prestige that would result from housing the only Jewish day school in the nation's capital. And if it takes running roughshod over the neighborhood, then so be it.

As I testified the other evening, my family and I have lived at 1622 Kalmia Road for 25 years. We have seen the Marjorie Webster School move out, Gallaudet University move in, Gallaudet University move out, and last year the Lowell School move in. When these proposals came before the Zoning Commission I wrote letters and testified in support of the schools. So did many of my neighbors who live across the street or whose property directly abuts the Webster/Gallaudet/Lowell property. In fact, there was virtually no neighborhood opposition to either Gallaudet or Lowell moving in. Both schools made a concerted effort to include the neighbors in decisions they made regarding traffic, parking and noise, and to make their facilities available to the community. It helps, of course, that this is property designed for a school. There are eight acres of land, sufficient for fields and playgrounds, as well as a self-contained roadway used to drop off and pick up students.

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EXHIBIT NO.337

I mention this because it is in such stark contrast to the proposal now before you. Today I drove down the alleyways between Juniper and Jonquil Streets that are to be used by the JPDS. It is immediately apparent that when cars are parked in the designated spaces the alleys will become dangerously narrow The notion that monitors will, or can, prevent parents leaving TI from making a left turn and heading south on 16th Street is laughable on its face. Backups on Juniper Street are a certainty. This is just one of many consequences that will befall the neighbors should this proposal be approved, but it highlights the fallacy of the entire concept.

You heard testimony that both synagogues are presently operating far below their capacity and that the introduction of 200 students will still be fewer people than either building can contain. This is terribly misleading. The synagogues are designed to hold large numbers of congregants for Friday evening and Saturday morning services. Moreover, driving on the Sabbath is forbidden at Chevr Shalom and is strongly discouraged at Tifereth Israel. The capacity issue has no relevance to housing a day school. The synagogues were not designed with this purpose in mind. Had they been, surely there would be adequate green space for a playground, a parking lot for teachers and staff and a place for children to be dropped off and picked up other than an alley that competes with delivery trucks and neighborhood traffic.

The proposal is patently unworkable and it pains me to think that the synagogue we once considered our religious home has seen fit to foist this plan on their very good and decent neighbors They are right to rise up in protest of this infringement on their community I strongly urge you to support them and reject the JPDS's application.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Sadoff

Cc: Joseph Hairston