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District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, NW
Room 210
Washington, DC 20001

Ref: BZA Application Case No. 16611: **Proposed Edmund Burke School Expansion**

Dear Members of the Board:

I write in support of the proposed new addition to Edmund Burke School. I have lived in Glover Park for ten years and worked in the District for more than sixteen. Both of my children attended public schools here; one is now at college and the other is currently enrolled at Burke. I do not speak from a position of power but as a single parent whose children Burke has served well.

Over the years I have watched District citizens respond to proposed changes and construction in my community. Those responses are often negative and defensive--they are expressions of fears about suspected negative consequences of change. People distrust growth and new construction. They've seen too much sprawl, too much urban decay; they've seen beautiful old buildings knocked down to make way for tacky buildings that fall apart in twenty years. People are interested in preservation, not expansion. Construction as positive reform is hard for people to accept. I know it is for me. But Burke's new addition is reform at it's finest; it will preserve a long tradition, provide opportunities for students who have been excluded from the private school system in the District, and it will actually improve the existing congestion that has at times been frustrating for everyone concerned. In my own neighborhood there was great resistance to the new Fresh Fields Super Market, a project that has proven a real boon for the neighborhood. At the same time, long-standing establishments, one a strip tease bar and the other, a disreputable bar that was the scene of a murder, have been accepted by the community simply because they have been around for years.

It has been a real struggle for me to raise two children on my own in the District. I could not have wished for a better education than my youngest son received at Stoddert Elementary. And on the basis of his work at Hardy Middle School, my oldest won a scholarship to Burke where he was welcomed whole-heartedly. He was never made to feel alone, he was never stigmatized because he did not come from the same economic or ethnic background of many students whose parents could afford to pay tuition there. And because of the fine education he received at Burke, he was accepted into Yale's School of Engineering.

BZA
Case No. 16611
Exhibit No. 121

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16611
EXHIBIT NO.121

I believe Burke's plan is a sound one and one that will serve the entire District community. I hope in future to see area schools and the Board of Zoning work together more proactively to arrive at solutions mutually beneficial to all members of our communities. Perhaps more educational institutions can be guided along the path of the Washington International School--making a home for themselves in beautiful old schools or in underutilized community centers which have enviable but scarcely used playing grounds and parking facilities. Unfortunately, that option does not apply to Burke, but I believe that in the end the community will be honored by the graduates of a school that has been in the neighborhood twenty-seven years and has preserved the educational tradition of a landmark building for over ninety.

Thank you for your patient attention to my letter.

Sincerely,



Portia Martin Jeffries