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Testimony of Emma Coleman Jordan for District of Columbia BZA:

Hearing on Edmund Burke School Application

May 15, 2001

I have lived at 2506 Upton St. NW since 1987. I am a professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center. I served as the founding president of the Upton St. Preservation League, a group of neighbors who came together successfully to obtain landmark status for
The historic building by Waddy Butler Wood, on the 5-acre parcel of the Carnegie Geophysical Institute property. I am here to oppose the Edmund Burke School application,
And to share my concerns about the cumulative traffic issues that have arisen from a series of
BZA decisions affecting the 2500-2900 blocks of Upton St.N.W.

Edmund Burke is the last in a series of variances sought by the institutions on Upton and Linnean Streets.

The traffic problems on this street derive from the fact that the
south side of the street is residential, and the north side consists of
Large institutions that do not have adequate on site parking. These institutions range from the purely local, to the international. The north side of Upton/Linnean St is now home to Edmund Burke School, Howard University Law School, Levine School of Music, Netherlands Minister's residence, Netherlands Embassy, Hillwood Museum. Each of these institutions has sought a permit for expansion or modification of the existing use of one of the buildings on the north side of Upton. As a long time resident, I have watched as this body, The BZA has taken each one up separately, without considering the cumulative impact of all the previous changes and the growing congestion on a narrow city street. Ideally, an integrated approach to planning in this neighborhood would permit adjustments to be made retroactively to allow a balanced approach to restraining the growth of institutional uses. However, the BZA can only decide matters as the landowners seek permits. Therefore, Edmund Burke, as the last of a long parade of applicants on this street must bear the special burden of an applicant seeking to obtain changes that will add unacceptable congestion and safety risks to an already fragile balance between the residential and institutional uses of this street.

Edmund Burke is running a school on a parcel that is clearly too
small to meet their needs. The students do not have an athletic field. I have seen the Edmund Burke students running down Upton street in groups for a gym class. They use the Howard Law School field for outdoor sports, because they have no outdoor space for athletic activities. The proposed

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expansion adds classroom and other building space, yet they do not provide off-street parking or outdoor athletic space adequate to support their proposed expansion.

Pedestrian Safety issues:

Sidewalks needed

The north side of Upton Street bordering the Howard Law School and Levine School properties does not have sidewalks. This means that students who park as far as Upton and Linnean now choose to walk in the middle of the street, oftentimes pulling large travel suitcases full of books on a street with barely enough room for two cars to pass in the middle of the street. These pedestrians who park on the street and walk to Edmund Burke, and Howard Law School often walk two and three abreast, thereby compounding the safety hazard. Without sidewalks, the blind curve at the entrance to the Levine School, is an extremely dangerous, for both pedestrians and cars.

I hope that the city will give top priority to installing sidewalks on the north side of Upton. I would not be surprised to find that a pedestrian has been killed while walking in the street around the blind curve at Levine's entrance.

Carpool Drop-off Conversations create congestion and safety hazards

Upton Street is too narrow to allow parking on both sides, and two way traffic from Connecticut to 29th Street. The intersection of Connecticut and Upton is an extremely narrow and dangerous location. I notice each morning that there are cars parked on both sides of the street in front of Edmund Burke. They appear to be Burke parents dropping their children off at school. As the mother of a fifth grader, and a college sophomore, I recognize the problem of the extended "drop-off conversation". The Edmund Burke carpool traffic is unique on the street, because parents understandably often take time to give a few last minute instructions and respond to their child's last minute requests. This understandable human transaction presents a major safety hazard when a car that is northbound on Connecticut Ave. try to turn right into Upton. This car cannot clear the intersection, if another car is waiting at the stop sign. There simply is not enough room for two moving vehicles and two parked cars (one on each side), and a carpool drop-off conversation, no matter how brief. I have witnessed several near-miss head-on collisions there.

Edmund BurkeVan Parking Problem- Loss of Credibility

Further, until recently, Edmund Burke parked their 3 vans on the north side of the street just east of the alley. This created a huge blind spot for cars turning from the alley onto Upton. This problem has been corrected. However, the fact that until Edmund Burke sought a permit to expand, they did not resolve this longstanding grievance with neighbors voluntarily detracts from their credibility in this matter that involves yet another traffic danger on this street.

Cumulative Burden- Edmund Burke is the Straw that will break the residential back of Upton Street.

The combination of Edmund Burke, Howard Law, Levine School, Netherlands Embassy, and the newly remodeled and expanded Hillwood Museum has increased the volume of traffic exponentially. The width of the street is inadequate to support the expansion.

I hope my comments are helpful to you as you work with the immediate problem of the Edmund Burke variance. Please feel free to contact me directly if I can be of further assistance.

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