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May 21, 2001

District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W.
Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Case Number 16611 - Edmund Burke Proposed Expansion

Dear Board of Zoning Adjustment:

Enclosed please find my signed and notarized statement in support of the application of Edmund Burke School to expand its facilities. I am making this statement in writing, rather than in person, because I am unavoidably required to travel for business on Tuesday, May 22, 2001, i.e. the date to which Burke's presentation to the BZA was continued last Tuesday, May 15.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this statement.

Very truly yours,

J. H. Brennan

Janis H. Brennan

Enclosure
cc: Edmund Burke School

BZA
Case No. 16611
Exhibit No. 177

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16611
EXHIBIT NO.177

Case Number 16611
Edmund Burke School Proposed Expansion

Statement to the District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment by Janis H. Brennan

For 14 years, I have been the neighbor of Edmund Burke School, as I live in the Van Ness East condominiums, at the very end of Van Ness Street and one block from the school. I am also the parent of a Burke graduate. My son Hilary attended Burke from 7th to 12th grades and graduated in 1994. So I know first-hand both about the impact that the school has on the neighborhood and about Burke's importance to our city and its children. I am providing my statement in writing because I am required to travel out of town for my work on Tuesday, May 22, 2001, and cannot attend the BZA hearing in person.

If it were not for Burke, I would have become a Maryland or Virginia resident in 1988, instead of the District taxpayer that I have remained. In 1988, I faced finding a school that could provide my son, who has attention deficit disorder, with the small classes and individualized attention that he would need to cope academically. Hilary was then in 6th grade at John Eaton Elementary, which he had attended since we moved here when he was in 4th grade. While I favored a public school education, I recognized that he would be lost at schools the size of Deal and Wilson. We looked at public schools in Maryland and Virginia and five private schools -- Burke and four schools in the Maryland suburbs -- and I prepared us for a move to Virginia or Maryland, as the odds favored his attending one of the schools we were looking at there. A public school education or financial aid from a private school was also a major consideration, as I was fresh out of law school and owed over twice as much money on the principal of student loans alone than I earned a year.

As it turned out, Burke offered the best environment for my son's special needs. With small classes and an emphasis on personal responsibility for one's behavior and its consequences, Burke provided an atmosphere where my son thrived. As a leader in requiring significant community service and special coursework every semester in which students are taught how to make ethical choices, Burke instilled in my son a strong, abiding sense of responsibility for his fellow man and the need to actively contribute to the welfare of his community. What is more, the school's scholarship program made it possible for him to attend 7th and 8th grades there, until I could begin to recover from the financial strains of getting my own education and allowing us to stay in Washington.

Burke is also the kind of neighbor that everyone should wish he or she had, and I would hold that view even if my son had never attended the school. Indeed, it has been 7 years since my son was at Burke, so at this point I primarily am a neighbor of the school just like everyone else. Anyone who would take 15 minutes to find out about Burke's programs -- the thousands of hours that its students put into community service projects every year, the unrelenting emphasis on ethical and responsible behavior, the economic and ethnic diversity of its student body -- and to really think through how vital such programs are to community stability and development, would understand what an asset Burke is to its neighborhood and to our city. Not to belittle neighborhood concerns, but it is difficult to see how such essential benefits could be outweighed by the few extra minutes or seconds that the traffic associated with the school sometimes takes.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this statement.

Janis H. Brennan
2939 Van Ness St., NW - Apt. 607
Washington, D.C. 20008

Sworn to and subscribed before me
this 21st day of May, 2001

Notary Public for the District of Columbia
My Commission expires: 6/14/04