3400 Macomb Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016

November 9, 2000

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF ZONING
00 NOV 13 A 9:21

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

RE: BZA Application Case no.16611: Proposed Edmund Burke School Expansion

Dear Board Members:

I am writing in support of the Edmund Burke School's application for a variance. I have been a resident of the District of Columbia for 27 years. My stepson attended Burke in the 1980's; he is now a teacher there. My son and daughter are presently students in the 6th and 9th grades respectively.

As a resident of Cleveland Park and as past Chair of the Architectural Review Committee in Cleveland Park for 4 years, I have been closely involved with the changes that other private schools have undertaken to improve their services to their respective student bodies.

As Chair of the ARC, I worked closely with the Washington International School several years ago when they erected a new gymnasium and administrative/classroom building. Although a small number of vocal parties in the neighborhood opposed the project, now that it has been completed there is less traffic congestion and no overuse of the new facility. I know this firsthand because I live on Macomb Street. This project gave the school what it needed with no adverse impact on the neighborhood. In fact, the final traffic plan has lessened the congestion at the school's entrance.

BZA
Case No. 16611
Exhibit No. 67

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16611
EXHIBIT NO.67

Other schools have undertaken similar projects. The Maret School undertook a massive project three years ago. They, too, worked with their neighbors to lessen traffic and bus noise -- again successfully. The National Cathedral School erected a new building about three years ago, and although some neighbors had complaints, the building is attractive, sited well on the property, and has had no adverse impact on the surrounding neighbors. NCS is also in the process of final review for construction of a new athletic complex, and while some neighbors are opposed, work between the school and its neighbors have resolved some of the controversial issues. The Field School has also recently received BZA approval for work on its new campus on Foxhall Road, NW.

The Edmund Burke School's situation is slightly different in that it does not have a "campus". It is a true city school, parked at the end of a residential street, next to a vibrant commercial strip. Yes, traffic is congested at morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up, but it's no worse that traffic at NCS, Beauvoir, Sidwell Friends, or Hearst. Burke should be applauded for its continuing efforts to address the traffic congestion -- last spring there was a teacher directing traffic every morning and every afternoon; there is now a curbside designated drop-off area in front of the school which can accommodate 5 or 6 cars; all students are to be dropped off at this area only; there is a police officer directing vehicles every morning and every afternoon; students and faculty do not park on Upton Street.

The new building plan has been designed to improve traffic flow, but nothing is going to make it go away. Burke has occupied its spot on Upton Street for twenty-six years, long before many of the neighbors moved in. When you live next to or near a school, traffic, noise, after school activities are to be expected. To think otherwise is naive. I live across the street from John Eaton Elementary School and Macomb Playground. There are times when parking is tough and traffic is backed up. The school and the park were there long before I bought my house, so what are my grounds for complaint? Should John Eaton not have recess, or it's annual block party because of the noise and traffic? Should there be no DC Little League at Macomb Park or no annual Halloween Parade because I can't park in front of my house?

These are the realities of living near a school and Burke has been a very good neighbor. Burke is an excellent, demanding, college prep school with a diversified student body. It prides itself on community service and teaches its students to become active, caring members of the DC community. It wants to remain a "city school". The proposed plan is not grandiose or unnecessary; the school needs more space to prepare its students for their future. Given its history, I think you can be assured that the Edmund Burke School will continue to be a good neighbor and that, when completed, the final project will be a credit to the neighborhood.

Very truly yours,

Judith A. Sabella

Judith A. Sabella