STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF BZA APPLICATION #16617

Owner:	Peter Bell and Sharon Dworkin
Address:	1726 18th Street, NW: square 133, lot 133.
Lot size:	801 square feet
footprint of existing structure:	696 square feet
footprint of structure with proposed addition:	801 square feet

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF ZONING
2000 AUG 30 AM 10:33

This is a four story owner occupied single family house in a R-5-B zone. It already covers nearly 100% of its lot, leaving a narrow 5 foot wide slot of a rear yard. The rear yard is bound on its long sides by building walls approximately 35 feet high. The building was constructed over 100 years ago before the enactment of the present Zoning Regulations.

The subject property presents a particularly unfortunate configuration of structure and land, because the rear yard is lower by several feet than the adjacent sidewalk. This creates a sump which is drained with a typical area drain. The trap of the area drain dries out, and since the sanitary sewers are combined with the storm sewers in this area of Washington, DC, the area drain then acts as a vent for the sanitary drain system. In the constricted rear yard, this causes a noticeable build up of noxious odor, causing a health problem and an infestation of mosquitos and other insects not only to this property but also to the immediate neighborhood.

The proposed solution to resolve this health problem is to add a one story addition to fill up the 5' - 0" wide bottom of the rear yard. This would elevate the roof of the addition above the adjacent sidewalk, so that the rear yard area could drain by gravity to the sidewalk from the roof of the proposed addition, thus eliminating the offending area drain.

There already exists a single story brick wall closing off the existing rear yard from the sidewalk. The proposed addition would be concealed behind this existing wall, so that the proposed structure could not be seen from the sidewalk, street or any public area.

In addition to resolving the health issue, the infill structure at the bottom of the rear yard would make the severely non conforming proportion of the rear yard less non conforming. The Zoning Ordinance requires a height to width ratio of 3:1 or less. At present, this ratio is 7:1. With the proposed addition, the ratio would be reduced to 5:1.

In summary, the owner requests that this variance be granted for the following reasons:

1. The lot and structure configuration are exceptional, arising from the topography of the site which places the rear yard below the adjacent public space. This special condition causes the unhappy and unhealthy practical difficulty that the area cannot be drained

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and vented properly.

2. The neighborhood will not be adversely impacted. The proposed addition will not be visible from the sidewalk or street. The neighborhood will in fact be improved by the elimination of an unsanitary condition. The Owner will be talking to neighbors about this proposal, and will attend the ANC meeting and local citizens' group meetings when the subject is scheduled.

3. The intent of the Zoning Regulations to allow properly proportioned open space would not be violated by the granting of this variance, since the proposed addition would result in the proportions of the rear yard being more nearly in conformance with the proportions required by the Regulations.