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Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Re: BZA Application No. 16852
St. Patrick's School - 4925 MacArthur Blvd.

Dear Chairman Griffis and Members of the Board:

I live with my family on 46th Street, off W Street, around the corner from St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School. My children attend the school, and we moved from Virginia so that my daughter could begin preschool there four years ago. It gives us tremendous pleasure to walk our children to school, to the library, to the markets, and to play in the parks surrounding us. One of the things that attracted us so strongly to the neighborhood was the fact that so many schools (not just St. Patrick's) were in the immediate area: we felt those schools represented life, vibrancy, a commitment to the future, and the possibility that we could educate our children well without having to move to the suburbs.

By profession, I am a conflict resolution specialist. I teach courses in multi-party conflict resolution at Georgetown Law Center, and I run the conflict resolution grantmaking program for a major foundation. As a professional, and as a citizen, it disturbs me that each of the zoning fights around school expansion is fought in a very narrow context, without a central planning process that would help all residents balance our desire for quiet and stability with the needs of an expanding population of children and families. I feel that all voices need to be heard – those who support school development as a central part of what we value in the neighborhood, as well as those opposed. We might be surprised to find that there is a great deal we all share, namely a desire for a green, quiet, neighborly area whose future is decided by a broad range of citizens representing many perspectives.

I look to the ANC to represent this wide spectrum of voices and to help craft equitable solutions to complex community issues. I applaud the ANC for the care, time, and detail they are giving to considering this zoning exception, and the larger question of how to balance the needs of all community residents. While I have great respect for both the Palisades Citizens Association and the ANC, I have been troubled at all the meetings I have attended (except the one run by Erik

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16852
EXHIBIT NO.225

Gaull) by the rancorous, biased and disrespectful tone of the PCA and ANC questions and responses. I felt that many questions and comments evidenced bias in the Commission's views on this issue, and raised ugly questions of class and generational conflict that do not fit with my view of our neighborhood. A past PCA president accused St. Patrick's of "stuffing the room" with parents. In fact, these were parents' voices that HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD because of the way the ANC and PCA have commandeered the process to favor the immediate neighbors of the MacArthur property.

I wholeheartedly support St. Patrick's acquisition of the 4925 MacArthur Boulevard site, and I feel strongly that, given the values of citizenship, honesty, and community that St. Patrick's teaches our children and practices itself, the school will demonstrate the same values as neighbors. Even more important than my individual view on this dispute, I entreat my neighbors and fellow community residents to join together to resolve these kinds of decisions in a balanced, fair, and inclusive way that will rise above individual disputes and will help us move toward a collaborative approach to planning our community's future. I urge you to consider my thoughts as you decide this application. In its efforts to attract new residents, the city must expand the educational options for our children.

Very truly yours,

Melanie Greenberg
2230 46th Street, NW
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