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April 12, 2002

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:

I am a twelve-year resident of the Palisades with three school-aged children and I am writing today in support of St. Patrick's application to locate its 7th and 8th grade program on MacArthur Boulevard.

I come from a family of teachers. My father's 35-year career in education included time spent as a teacher, principal and school administrator in Pennsylvania. During his career my father built five or six new schools and expanded several others. Some were in residential neighborhoods, and some were in 40-acre tracts of land, surrounded by cornfields. While the characters of the neighborhoods those schools were built in were different from the Palisades and even from each other, three issues were universally raised in protest: traffic, noise and number of students. This set of concerns is common to the St. Patrick's proposal. What is uncommon is the degree to which St. Patrick's has reached out to the neighbors, to the Palisades Citizens Association and to the ANC to address these issues and the individual concerns of the nearby neighbors. I am concerned that despite St. Patrick's efforts, its proposal has not received the benefit of fair and open-minded consideration from the nearby neighbors or the ANC.

St. Patrick's has responded to each and every issue raised by the concerned neighbors in a detailed and thoughtful manner. A traffic plan has been developed which the DC Department of Transportation believes will have no adverse impact on the neighborhood. In addition, St. Patrick's has proposed a new carpool drop off plan for its Whitehaven Parkway campus designed to ameliorate traffic concerns at that location.

As one of many examples of its good faith, St. Patrick's has indicated a willingness to covenant to limit enrollment at the site to 60 students. I believe that such a binding restriction deserves the community's serious consideration. Instead, thus far, there have been no willing beneficiaries of such a covenant and one of the representatives of the community opponents has stated that a covenant would be "worthless."

Even minor items such as the ban on a basketball hoop and the removal of the dumpster have been handled with great care. I am convinced that with the recommended conditions, the use will not result in objectionable impacts because of noise, traffic, number of students or other objectionable conditions.

BZA
Case No. 16852
Exhibit No. 229

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16852
EXHIBIT NO.229

I was extremely disappointed that, in voting 5-0 to reject the application, the ANC placed substantial weight on the flawed and inflammatory petition that was circulated through the neighborhood. In addition, the ANC alleged traffic impacts as one of the major concerns. Nonetheless, in its discussion on April 2, the ANC failed to mention the letter it had received from the D.C. Department of Transportation finding no adverse traffic impacts associated with the plan. Such an important letter deserved at least some mention at the meeting. Finally, the ANC was not willing to discuss any potential conditions in the event that the application is granted over its objections. The "all or nothing" approach demonstrates the ANC's refusal to engage in a serious negotiation and to take advantage of meaningful concessions such as the school's offer of a covenant.

Mr. Chairman, this city needs more educational options for its citizens, and in particular, it needs more independent school seats in 7th and 8th grade to meet growing demand. St. Patrick's proposal helps to meet this need in a low-impact way: small student body, minimal traffic impact and an administration that is determined to make this school a good neighbor and a valued addition to the 4900 block of MacArthur Boulevard. I urge you to support St. Patrick's application.

Sincerely,

