John and April Delaney
4115 Parkglen Court, NW
Washington DC 20007
202-256-2185

April 10, 2002

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2002 APR 16 AM 9:37

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:

As a residents of Northwest Washington and neighbors of the proposed school site associated with referenced application, we are pleased to offer our full support for the proposed application. St. Patrick's church and the accompanying Episcopal Day School have played a major role in the Palisades community for several years. While many residents and affected individuals have voiced both concerns about and support of this application, we want to ensure the BZA is aware of several issues before it renders an opinion.

Our support for this application stems primarily from the fact that there is a dire need for more educational opportunities for the children of Washington, D.C. Many young families in the Palisades, Foxhall, Georgetown, Spring Valley and Kent areas (those areas closest to this site) are deeply receptive to having additional educational opportunities for our children. An unfortunate fact is that the current D.C. public schooling options provided for middle and upper school students are not viable alternatives, particularly given recent cuts in public spending and the lack of resources available to these students. Moreover, the competition into local private and parochial schools is intense, and many students are not guaranteed a position within Northwest Washington. Accordingly, many families will be forced to either shuttle their children to private schools in the suburbs (or lengthy bus trips), or to move out of the city limits.

Our children currently attend St. Patrick's school. However, continuing to attend a neighborhood school (or even one located in Northwest Washington) will be a challenge given the intense competition for available "slots" at these schools. Several other concerned families feel the same way; it is so important to be able to preserve the ability for our children to attend schools within their neighborhood.

Second, the noise and privacy concerns voiced by local residents are wildly inflated. Macarthur Boulevard is a major thoroughfare within Washington, DC; it is not a quiet residential neighborhood with singing birds and card-playing elders on the front

BZA
Case No. 16852
Exhibit No. 241

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16852
EXHIBIT NO.241

porch. The continual din of metro buses, other buses, delivery trucks, morning and afternoon rush hour traffic and commercial activity is very loud. It is abundantly clear to anyone with an objective view that there will be no negative traffic impact associated with sixty new middle school children. In fact, and by way of comparison, one new office building in downtown Washington with new tenants would result in a significantly greater traffic impact to the area in question.

Third, some have argued that property values would be affected by this expansion. As a young family, we place a premium on houses located near schools. It is our experience that property values rise when located near schools such as St. Patrick's. Those stating otherwise probably do not have school-age children, and/or are unfamiliar with the housing market in Washington.

Last, as demonstrated by the overwhelming support of the Palisades Community Association, there is great support at large for the expansion of this school. Those directly adjacent to the site state that it is "their neighborhood" and they are very negatively impacted. But, they forget that the Palisades is also our neighborhood. And most residents in the Palisades, and the surrounding neighborhoods, greatly welcome the addition of this expansion. The effect on surrounding property is minimal, but the positive impact on the community at large is great.

Zoning battles often are waged in the context of growth vs. no growth; residential vs commercial; or clear objectionable use (i.e. trash facilities, co-generation, night clubs) vs. larger neighborhood concerns. We have been somewhat amazed that this application has drawn such controversy since it does not fall within any of these categories. The current property is not being used for residential use, no significant changes (other than clear exterior improvements) are proposed to the property by the applicant, no children will be dropped off at the property, the property will not be used during the summer (consistent with the current use), and finally the property will only be used as a middle school. At the PCA Board Meeting many of those opposed to the applicant (and some of the Board members) talked about a "moratorium on schools in the Palisades." Perhaps this battle is being waged on a new front; abundant school options vs. limited school options; young families with children vs. others. We hope not, and we hope the BZA will not support those opposed to this project and those opposed to the expansion of school options.

I hope these comments will assist the BZA in rendering its decision.

Sincerely yours,

April and John Delaney