4913 MacArthur Blvd, NW
Washington, DC 20007

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February 11, 2002

Subject: Proposed Expansion of St. Patrick's School to 4925 MacArthur Boulevard

Dear Mr. Finney,

My husband and I reside at 4913 MacArthur Boulevard, immediately next to the property for which St. Patrick's is seeking a zoning variance to expand its school. We wish to add our voices directly to the points eloquently raised by neighborhood representatives and we urge you and the ANC to oppose BZA approval of any such variance.

While MacArthur Blvd. is a main thoroughfare of the city, it is also primarily a residential one between V Street to the east and Dana Place to the west. Placement of a school in the midst of these homes would be highly disruptive to those living along MacArthur Blvd. And Ashby Street, bringing increased traffic, noise, and trash.

This impacts us in a most direct way. Our home, built in 1926, is situated just 46 inches from the retaining wall at the property line, a distance that clearly would not meet current code specifications. Nevertheless, this is an exceptionally narrow space between the properties. The edge of the roof, in fact, is but inches from that the wall. My husband was required to accept an early retirement last May due to heart condition and is at home during the week. His health and our well-being are at risk with this proposal.

The negative impacts of having a school next door include:

- **Traffic and Parking Congestion**: The daily arrival and departure of 60 students and 12 faculty will compound the congestion problems on Ashby Street. The proposed bus drop-off on MacArthur Blvd. will result in increased congestion directly in front of our home. Given the propensity of many drivers to treat MacArthur Boulevard as a speedway and the tendency of inattentive passing motorists to strike parked cars here (this has occurred with our cars and killed one of our dogs), it is difficult to see how such increased congestion, including nights and weekends during school events, can be regarded as safe or in the public interest.
- **Noise:** Apart from the obvious increase in traffic noise and dirt from buses and car, the presence of a large number of active preteens would bring significant outdoor recreation noise. This is plainly inconsistent with the residential usage of the neighborhood, where the loudest daytime noise is a discontented canine.
- **Trash**: For an urban area, this section of Palisades is relatively free of pests at present. Altering the trash mix of the dumpster to include food wastes from over 70 persons daily risks attracting rats and raccoons. This is compounded by the increased noise caused by more frequent trash removal than at present. The prospect of increased litter in the street or blown, washed, or thrown onto our

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BZA
Case No. 16852
Exhibit No. 46

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
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EXHIBIT NO.46

property from adolescents in what is probably the most careless period of their maturation is of great concern.

- **Structural and drainage issues:** The property at 4925 MacArthur appears not to have satisfactory drainage of underground water, as the bowing of the retaining wall attests. The hydrostatic pressure against that wall after moderate to heavy rains causes it to "weep" for days on end. There is no surface drainage system to handle storm water from the parking lot surface, which pours over the wall onto our lot in a tremendous volume. Surely this lack must be inconsistent with current code and will need to be addressed. Will St. Patrick's undertake an engineering study and correction of the problem prior to any work on the wall being done?
- **Safety:** What is to keep student, errant basketballs, and other objects from flying over the wall at random? A fence high enough to prevent that would surely be visually offensive in a residential neighborhood. Is the retaining wall strong enough to withstand heavy foot use by youngsters playing near the lip?
- **Concern for the quality of life in the Palisades neighborhood:** Based on past experience, it appears that the word of St. Patrick's cannot be believed. They have consistently lied about development plans so there is little reason to believe them now. For the most part, those attending this school will not come from the neighborhood as is the case with the children who attend the Key School. They will have little stake in preserving the quality of life of those immediately

We would vastly prefer to have the property used for the residential purposes for which it was intended even if that means the construction of several homes in place of the present structure. There would then be homeowners who deeply cared about their property, their neighbors, and the community. Please let us know if you need any additional information from us or would care to see our home's location.

Sincerely,

Cathy Wright
Lawrence T. Skrivseth

Mr. John Finney
Chair
Advisory Neighborhood Commission
5275 Watson St, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Cc: Ms. Eleanor Roberts Lewis
Northwest Current