John C. Briggs
4958 Ashby St., NW
Washington, DC 20007

March 22, 2002

Board of Zoning Adjustment
DC Office of Zoning
Suite 210 South
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Case 16852 - Application of St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School, pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3104.1, for a special exception to allow a private school having 60 students, grades 7 through 9, under section 206, in an R-1-B District at premises 4925 MacArthur Boulevard, NW (Square 1393, Lot 823).

Dear Board Members:

Please do not approve the special exception requested by St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School.

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In summary the proposed used of the property at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard is:

- **Bad for the City of Washington.**
- **Bad for the students who would use the facility.**
- **Bad for the Palisades neighborhood.**

The following discusses some of the reasons that you should not approve the request.

Effects on the District of Columbia

Returning the property to residential use would return the property to the District's tax roles. Currently it is tax exempt and under the proposal for use by St. Patrick's it would remain tax exempt.

The majority of the students being supported by this tax exemption are not residents of the neighborhood or even of the District but are commuters from the suburbs.

Additional city services will be required to support the suburban students if the school expands to that location.

The District should not loose yet another historic home. The demographics now support the use of the property as a residence not a school. When the home was original changed from residential use, the market demand for a large house in the city was low. Now, there is a high demand for large houses in excess of one million dollars as evidences by the quick sale of the new home, a half block north on MacArthur. The mixture of large and small houses provides a more diverse

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Case No. 16852
Exhibit No. 58

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16852
EXHIBIT NO.58

community and more exciting community space than does a suburban landscape of all one size homes.

The District need residents not commuters particularly commuters to a tax exempt organization who will be contributing nothing to the City.

Effects on the Students

The property was built as a single family home. St. Patrick's proposes to have 72 people there, 60 students and 12 faculty and staff. To put this into perspective, think of the maximum number of people you have ever had in your home. Then compare that number with 72. Granted that you may live in a smaller house but you will likely come to the conclusion that this will not be a good learning environment without major structural changes to the property.

There will be no lunch room, no assembly room, no real library, and no campus other than the neighborhood streets. The alternative would be to expand the building onto the vacant land to the south, but St. Patrick's has said they will not be doing this.

The National Park Service land across McArthur Blvd. from the property already has a problem with high school students using the area as a party area after school and at nighttime. While neighbors have been aggressive in trying to stop this activity, it still continues. In the past, there have been afternoon attempted house break-ins (one successful) which were associated with a bad element attracted to the gatherings. Most recently, a stolen Lexus SUV was recovered on Ashby St. on March 1. Again, police believe that it was stolen by people who came to party in the woods. Having even younger teenagers in the same area will not improve the problem. Even worse, the students make get involved with the older individuals and their activities.

Neighborhood Effects

The Palisades is a neighborhood of people who know their neighbors and support community activities. Returning the property to residential use would help the neighborhood by having neighbors in the house on nights, weekends, and holidays. These are people who will continue to make the Palisades a desirable place to live.

The property at 4925 MacArthur Blvd. is closely surrounded by residential property. Sixty young teenagers make a lot of noise even when well behaved. There is no buffer to separate the surrounding houses from the noise.

The only access to the property is off of Ashby St. a narrow street with limited access which is designed for residential traffic not the large volumes of traffic that the school will generate.

The traffic plan proposed by St. Patrick's to have students be dropped off at the Whitehaven campus then walk under adult supervision or take a shuttle bus to the school will not be acceptable to the student's parents. Most of the students

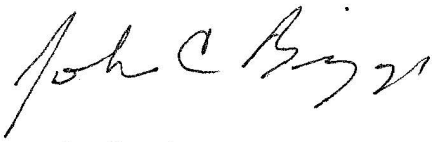
will be dropped off on Ashby St. or MacArthur Blvd. because mommy or daddy is running late and it is past time to drop them at Whitehaven.

St. Patrick's is not serving as a neighborhood school or even as a city school. According to St. Patrick's, most of the attendees will be teenagers commuting in from the suburbs.

The open space on the south side of the property is of sufficient size to build a second house. It would preferable neighbors to have families living next to them than an over crowded school. It would also be better for the Palisades neighborhood to have families who want to live in the city rather than a school filled with suburban teenagers.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide you with additional information on the application. Again, I urge you to not approve the application. Please feel free to contract me if you have any questions. I may be reached at 202 342-9275.

Truly yours,



John C. Briggs