5209 MacArthur Terrace N.W.
Washington, D.C. 2002
August 24, 2002

Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street N.W., Suite 210 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: **BZA Application #16915**
Barbara Schriever Allan
2828 Hurst Terrace N.W.
Washington D.C. 20016

Dear Chairman Griffis and Members of the Board:

Surely our zoning laws are not meant to exclude, to carve away, our most valuable community assets.

We are writing to you in *strong support* of Barbara Allan's application to continue operation of her child development center (d/b/a "Barbara's Montessori School") at 2828 Hurst Terrace N.W., in our Palisades neighborhood. However, we are not going to write a letter full of protest. We would rather simply tell you what Barbara's school has done for us as residents of the Palisades for 23 years.

We emphasize the phrase "what it has done for us *as residents*" because the influence of Barbara's school has extended far beyond the several years in which our children participated in her early childhood development program. Without question, it is a wonderful school; and, without question, it provided our two children with an excellent intellectual, emotional, and social foundation. But far more important has been the impact of Barbara's school on our family, our neighbors, and so many other residents of the Palisades, as *citizens* of this neighborhood. That seems to be the issue at the heart of this matter -- what is the impact of Barbara's Montessori School on the neighborhood?

We can tell you, unequivocally, that this school has *encouraged*, *enhanced*, and *immeasurably enriched* the community life of the Palisades. Barbara's school has proven to be one of the key institutions in our community that creates a web of acquaintanceship, then neighborly familiarity, then trust, and ultimately that sense of care and responsibility that is crucial to a vibrant and involved neighborhood. For 18 years, Barbara's school has provided an intersection for the many different elements that constitute our neighborhood: children, parents, neighbors, caregivers, postal workers, merchants, teachers ... the list goes on and on. As our children walked to school, we met many

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diverse neighbors along the way, and talked to old and young; and what we talked about most often was *our* neighborhood -- neighborhood delights and neighborhood cares and concerns. These were the same people that we would later work with on projects to improve the neighborhood, and to enrich our community life. The roots of many diverse relationships developed in and around this remarkable neighborhood school. They continue growing to this day, and they continue to benefit the Palisades community.

Of course, a neighborhood school of any kind can provide these same benefits, to some extent. But in its particularly *neighborhood feeling* -- its intimate backyard atmosphere -- *this* school has provided a crucial ingredient that is particularly important in creating a *nurturing* neighborhood community. For these very young children, and for these very new parents, Barbara's school has provided "home schooling" in the very best sense. As so many tiny neighborhood children began their first tentative steps beyond their individual doorways, we -- all the residents of our community -- knew that they could be "at home" at Barbara's, at home here in the Palisades. At this often difficult transitional time for young families and young children, the community could say, through Barbara's school: "We embrace you -- banging lunch boxes, waiting parents, gleefully shouting toddlers -- we embrace you all."

What an important message for any community to send to its children, its families, and all its other residents! It is a message of inclusion, not exclusion. It is a message of support rather than indifference, or worse, irritation. As the neighborhood sends such an embracing message to its youngest members and their families, we *all* benefit from hearing it. What we do for them, we are ultimately doing for ourselves as a community -- building a sense of security, trust, care, and responsibility among all our members. In this embrace of all our members, we as a city, as a neighborhood, and as citizens nurture the roots of community, and nourish the roots of peace.

And we say again: *Surely our zoning laws are not meant to exclude, to carve away, our most valuable community assets.*

Respectfully,

Pamela J. Smith

Pamela J. Smith

Daniel C. Smith

Daniel C. Smith