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Mr. Geoffrey Griffis, Chair
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, NW
Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Case #16920

Dear Mr. Griffis:

My name is Susan Perkoff Bass. I am the wife of William Jackson Bass, owner of 1629 21st Street, NW and applicant in the above-referenced case. I am also the mother of five-year-old triplets – Margaret, William and Sarah Bass. I am writing today in strong support of the position that the presence of art galleries in Dupont Circle enhances the quality of family life there.

Almost 15 years ago, as a recently engaged couple, my husband and I took up residence in the rear apartment of our home on 21st Street. We looked forward to living and someday raising our family in a neighborhood that offered tree-lined streets, charming homes, convenience to my job, and proximity to wonderful restaurants, shops and cultural amenities, especially the art galleries. In fact, at the time we moved into our home, an art gallery was already in residence in the English basement apartment.

With the arrival of our family, instead of fleeing to the suburbs, we chose to renovate and move into the larger section of the house (while maintaining a gallery below). For the next five years, we lived very happily with our children in the heart of Dupont Circle's Gallery Row. Our children were always welcome in the galleries and I cherished the rare opportunities that a working mom has to slip into the galleries. The gallery owners were great neighbors and their schedules greatly complemented our lives. They were there to watch our home when we were at work, accept packages and call us when emergencies arose. They never complained about the noise from both indoor and outdoor activities that our children (and three vocal west highland terriers ) produced.

Our children were able to have many special experiences living among the galleries in Dupont Circle: tea parties at a friend's house (also an art gallery) in the midst of modern European art, exotic birthday presents such as African pennies from a nearby gallery owner, and an

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opportunity to learn about different cultures and countries.

Ironically, it is the opportunity to have an art gallery in a portion of a residential building that has made it affordable and convenient for several families in the Dupont Circle area to raise their children in the City. Rents in the area have sky-rocketed over the years, not because of gallery expansion (the number of galleries has actually dropped) but because of the high prices being paid for, and expensive renovations being made, to residential properties. Without being able to combine residential use with other uses of the properties, many families would not be able to afford the cost of living in Dupont Circle.

On no occasion did the presence of the art galleries threaten the health, safety or welfare of our children or otherwise negatively impact them. The primary reason for our decision to move from Dupont Circle just up Connecticut Avenue to Woodley Park was so our children could attend the Oyster School, the only bilingual school in the City. My husband and I have a strong commitment to our children receiving a bilingual education. My husband stood in line outdoors for over 48 hours in the frigid January weather almost two years ago trying to get our children into the school without our having to move from Dupont Circle. When this effort did not work, we reluctantly decided to rent a home within the Oyster School District. We have maintained ownership of the 21st street property because we plan on one day living there again. Any modifications to the property to allow its use as a gallery will be minimal in order to preserve this option.

Families and galleries in Dupont Circle have a long happy record of co-existence and mutual support. The neighborhood agreement that we have entered into with well over the majority of our neighbors (including the majority of those with children) demonstrates our long term commitment to ensuring protection of this unique residential community while supporting a vibrant cultural community.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have concerning this matter.

Very truly yours,

Susan P. Bass

Susan Perkoff Bass