COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WASHINGTON, D.C 20001

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Mr. Geoffrey H. Griffis, Chairperson
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW Suite 210
Washington DC 20001

RE: Case 16970 (NCRC/Highland Place)

Dear Mr. Griffis:

I am writing to support the recommendation of ANC 3-C and the nearby property owners that the special exception application of the National Child Research Center (NCRC) at 3209 Highland Place, N.W. be denied. In particular, the applicant does not meet the requirements of sections 205.3 and 3108.1 of the Zoning Regulations because the use creates objectionable traffic conditions that adversely affect the use of neighboring properties.

I am familiar with the NCRC site. I live perhaps three-fourths of a mile away, and was chairman of the affected advisory neighborhood commission (ANC 3-C) five years ago when NCRC last sought a special exception for its school.

I regret that I cannot support the applicant this time. The National Child Research Center is a long-standing, well-regarded institution in the Cleveland Park neighborhood. Many neighborhood kids have received their pre-school education at NCRC, and it has become so popular that families from around the city seek to enroll their children there. It is the policy of the District to encourage the presence of quality schools, and I feel the District benefits from the presence of many fine private schools such as NCRC. However, their location should be appropriate. The issue is not whether a pre-school, or more particularly, NCRC, is good, or is an asset to the District. It is. Rather, the issue is whether this site remains appropriate under the special exception criteria for an increase in enrollment and expansion of the facility. It does not.

In 1998 the applicant came before you because its certificate of occupancy for 90 students was inconsistent with its child care license for 120 students. NCRC stated then that it did not want to increase its *enrollment* above 120 students; in fact, its *enrollment* at the time was 108. The traffic impacts at that time were adverse, but the ANC, with some reluctance from the community, wanted to accommodate the school while using the BZA process to force resolution of the traffic impacts. Mitigation measures were agreed upon, but the adverse impacts remain. If the school has not been able to ameliorate the adverse impacts over the last five years, I do not see how it will ameliorate the impacts by adding 10,000 square feet and increasing the enrollment by 50%.

BZA
Case No. 16970
Exhibit No. 126

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.126

In deciding this case, I ask that you consider asking the Zoning Commission to review the zoning regulations with regard to schools locating in residential zones. The factors present at the time of the 1956 Lewis Report have changed considerably: there is a higher utilization of private schools in the District, many or most children no longer walk to school but are driven, and most schools are no longer neighborhood-centered.

NCRC is an excellent school. It is in demand and wants to grow to meet that demand. But its site is not appropriate for this expansion.

Sincerely,

Phil Mendelson
Councilmember At-Large