3218 Newark Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
June 18, 2003

Mr. Geoffrey Griffiths
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, NW Suite 201
Washington, D.C. 20001

D.C. ZONING
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Dear Mr. Griffiths:

I am writing to protest the expansion of the National Child Research Center (NCRC) on Highland Place, N.W. and the inevitable increase in traffic to our neighborhood.

My husband, Robert Stern, and I moved to Highland Place in 1962 and to our current house at 3218 Newark Street in 1976. In these forty years we have raised our four children and welcome our grandchildren. Our whole family actively participates in community activities: Macomb Street Playground, Cleveland Park Library, John Eaton School, and we continue to volunteer in our neighborhood and frequent the businesses of Connecticut Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue.

We have watched NCRC expand, increase enrollments and special events, and attract parents and caregivers who have less and less consideration to the residents of our streets and arrive in bigger and bigger vehicles. In order to promote their aggrandizement and keep unruly parents in line, the school employs more and more traffic attendants. My latest count was at least twelve of them, wearing red vests and making our small streets look like a Redskins parking lot.

Every work day I walk to the Metro at 8:30 a.m. and have to weave my way down 33rd Place, Highland Place, and Ashley Terrace to Ordway Street---all congested with NCRC cars, many of them idling and polluting the air. Luckily, I am not in the neighborhood at 11:30, 1:00, or 3:30 to experience again the parade of parents and nannies. However, if I should choose to drive at any of those times, it is impossible to back the car out of our driveway and turn in either direction. Also, if our grandchildren are visiting at those times, we cannot let them outside because the NCRC parade of cars make it too dangerous. The school and its traffic clearly holds us hostage!

NCRC claims that one need for expansion is to build a "motor activity" room so the children can run and ride trikes inside on rainy days. This will make them a "model school." I work in the field of education and have visited prize-winning Head Start and preschool programs all over the country, especially those that include children with disabilities. Even the best preschools are usually in much more modest facilities, such as Sunday school classrooms, and could not possibly replicate this lavish "model" floorplan. NCRC obviously is planning to use the "motor activity" room for conferences. They have already brought 60 or more teachers to a Saturday conference, and if they ever get the space, they will bring more.

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Case No. 16970
Exhibit No. 215

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.215

The school claims that it has held numerous meetings with neighbors. This is true. They made detailed plans long before talking with us. And they have never compromised. They were not candid with us. They have never considered leaving the enrollment where it stands, which already surpasses a previous agreement, and making moderate renovations instead of demanding an elaborate campus. In acting so arrogantly, they have alienated almost all the neighbors and created an atmosphere of ill will.

We are the people who maintain our property, pay taxes to the District, and support many neighborhood institutions. We do not support NCRC and its building plans. It is critical that you understand that the school's expansion is destructive to the community.

Sincerely,

Virginia W. Stern

Cc: Mr. Andrew Altman
Director, Office of Planning
Suite 4000
801 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002