Consuelo Newman
123 S. Maple Avenue
Martinsburg, WV 25401

October 10, 2003

Mr. Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: The National Child Research Center and 3204 Highland Place

Dear Chairman Griffis ,

As an heir to 3204 Highland place NW, diagonally across the street from NCRC, it behooves me to respond to the letter written to you by our new tenants ,and also to respond to oral testimony given by one of them on October 7th 2003.

Neither I nor any member in my family is in favor of the expansion of NCRC, nor are we in favor of making Highland Place a one-way street. Both I and my sister Pia, who has complete legal authority over my mother's estate, have written to you so there can be no doubt that we are opposed to <u>any</u> expansion of NCRC. My family was further misrepresented in oral testimony given about our property on October 7th, a few days ago.

On July 19th , Hilary Rosen and Elizabeth Birch (parents of two current NCRC students) wrote a glowing letter to you in favor of making Highland Place a one-way street and of cheering the proposed expansion of NCRC.

They go on to say that "the amount of cars and disruption is so minimal that the objections and complaints we have long heard about seem completely disproportionate with reality", and that "for neighbors to suggest that some cars on Highland Place disrupts their way of life is absurd."

What they neglected to mention is that at the time of their letter, they had been living in our house for less than three weeks, and that the school was closed for summer recess, so, of course they were able to attest to the fact that " Highland Place retains a quiet, peaceful and very neighborhood-like atmosphere at all times."

It is a marvel to me how our tenants found the time and experience to write such a highly opinionated letter while still unpacking their belongings from their recent move into our neighborhood . How, I wonder, could they write such a letter unless they had already formed their opinion(s) <u>before</u> moving into our house?

There are two points in which I am in total agreement with our tenants. The first is that they say that "We have never seen so thoughtful an implementation of traffic management." This is because without it, the street would be in utter pandemonium, as it was in the early 70's when our street looked like a parking lot during school mornings, and, because of this, parents were in the habit of getting out of their cars and walking with their coffee to other parents' cars to chat while they waited their turn to drop off their children. Had I not witnessed this ,day after day, I wouldn't have believed it.

Mrs. Marshall, who lives next door at 3208 Highland, used to spend countless hours complaining to me about the traffic, as I waited for a break in the traffic to get to school and she to get to work. It amazes me that Mrs. Marshall has now changed her opinion about the school, but I cannot help but think that her feelings are tempered by the fact that her regular employee has a child at the school, allegedly on full scholarship.

Although the logjam of traffic was helped significantly by the then-director of the school, the enrollment has increased twice and another increase is being proposed now. How is it that a street that was too small to accommodate even 70 students can now, miraculously, serve twice that number?

The second point in which I agree with our tenants is with their statement that "no residence in the neighborhood

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has better proximity to give you this testimony than ours." I can assure you that everyone in our family is adamantly opposed both to the expansion of the school and to the one-way proposal of traffic suggested by NCRC.

Why would someone living at 3204 Highland Place be in favor of a proposal that would force us to go all the way down Newark street to get back to Highland Place from 34th Street? Why would we be in favor of making it even more difficult for us to use our driveway? And , why, when there is not even enough parking for workers to park their vehicles on our street , nor for family members or friends to park their cars while visiting, would we want to eliminate even one parking spot ? **To add insult to injury, we pay some of the highest real estate taxes in DC, while NCRC pays none.**

If Ms. Rosen and Ms. Birch truly were owners in Highland Place , they would realize that when they move out of our house next July, before the expansion is felt, they will be elsewhere while we, the true residents of Highland Place, are stuck with dealing with the effects of increased traffic, lower property values, and further disruption(s) to our neighborhood. This situation, is, regrettably, the position of the vast number of supporters of NCRC who will leave when their children graduate, and can thereby pooh-pooh the neighbors saying that we are irrational in our opposition to the expansion of the school.

What is ironic is how Ms. Rosen has so quickly become a champion of the school in written and now in oral testimony. While barely living at our house for four months, on October 7th, she had the chutzpah to say that my mother lives in a nursing home, (which she does not), and that no one in my family has lived in our house for years (my brother was living there less than a year ago and my mother shortly before that,) and finally, that she is in occasional contact with some heir in Philadelphia, (who is none other than the future executor to the estate.) On cross-examination, when asked whether she was aware that the owners are against the expansion, she said that my sister was equivocal; my sister has never spoken to Ms. Rosen on this subject, nor is her position in doubt.

More ironic still is that Ms. Rosen got up to speak representing our property after my sister's letter, written to you on August 29th , where she says, diplomatically, that "Our house is at the "elbow" of the street..We are diagonally across the street from the school. This is a particularly vulnerable spot in terms of traffic flow...I don't see how this (making Highland Place a one-way street,) will provide a solution to the problem of congestion...the traffic generated by NCRC exceeds the capacity for which Highland Place was designed. (It) has a negative impact on the residents who live there."

I consider it shocking that our tenants did not even approach us to ask what our feelings are vis a vis our property knowing very well about the controversy surrounding the school and our proximity to it; I find it difficult to believe that they were unaware of our position regarding the proposed expansion of the school, especially because there are now so few close neighbors who are in support of it. **As tenants, they are welcome to say whatever they wish, but I cannot help but notice how carefully written the letter is; it doesn't say that they are the owners of the house, but the implication is there.** I understand that Hilary Rosen and Elizabeth Birch are excellent tenants, and I regret any embarrassment that this letter may cause them. However, it is impossible for me not to respond to this.

Our property is a metaphor for the existing conflict. How can there exist such a difference of experience involving the exact same property? The impasse at 3204 Highland between its owners and its tenants epitomizes the controversy between the proponents for NCRC and those who are against it..Our interests are so very different. The school is and has been too large for our neighborhood for decades; we have tried to make peace. But I believe that the school now asks us to accept the impossible. **To allow this expansion is to forever altar life as it was on Highland Place,** (regardless of what our tenants say to the contrary). **This is something that I and so many of my neighbors are unwilling to accept. This is why so many of us have banded together and why we must fight this expansion.** While our tenants will blissfully go about their business elsewhere, we may be left with only our memories of what was unless we continue to insist that this time, the expansion must stop- period. In my opinion, the sanest solution to the problem is for NCRC to buy a larger property elsewhere that can accommodate all their current and future expansion needs, or to, at the very least, purchase a satellite property to take the overflow students. Otherwise, we shall be fighting this over and over at infinitum, and there never will be a viable solution, because, as we have said over and over for years and years there is not enough space here to accommodate all of the extra traffic.

Thank you for reading this.

Sincerely,

