Testimony before the BZA of

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Washington, D.C.

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My name is Deborah Both.

I have lived, together with my husband and children at 3411 33d Place NW since October 1978. Between 1980 and 1985, our children happily attended NCRC. My husband and I both consecutively served on the Board from 1980 through 1985. I considered myself then, and still do today, a great fan and supporter of the school and its presence in our neighborhood.

I have been personally involved in issues concerning the future and welfare of children in the District of Columbia for most of my professional life. I currently serve as the Vice Chair of DC Action for Children, a non-profit Child Advocacy organization, and will assume the Chairmanship next month. I have previously worked for the Children's Defense Fund, at the National Forum for the Future of Children and Families, a part of the National Academies, with the White House's National Adoption Initiative, and on the NCRC and Georgetown Day School Boards.

Our house is the only house that fronts onto 33d Place, the short connector street between Highland Place and Newark Street. Consequently every vehicle that visits NCRC must pass in front of our residence. I will not reiterate the testimony that you have already heard regarding the adverse impact that NCRC's traffic already has on the neighborhood. I would note, however, howdifficult it is for us to leave our house on some occasions, when, if bynecessity ,we must do so at the same time that the school's pick-up and dismissal traffic is circumventing the small neighborhood streets. My personal experience and observation of conditions on 33d Place and Highland are consistent with those shown in the video that was presented to you by my neighbors Bruce and Sallie Beckner.

In addition, while parked, the side mirrors on our car have been struck by vehicles passing on our narrow street. The fence in front of our house has been repeatedly hit by cars making illegal u-turns to avoid the NCRC congestion. On one occasion, after our car was hit and damaged, and a neighbor fortuitouslyobserved the NCRC parent driving away and advised us of a description of the car, we were able to get the school's assistance in securing payment for damage after pursuing the offending parent.

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A few years ago, because of the intolerable parking conditions that was caused by the school personnel all day parking, we petitioned and obtained the "Residential Zone" parking restrictions on 33d Place. This itself has created a burden on our friends, and persons performing work at our house, who cannot now park for extended periods while visiting us.

I appear before you to suggest that there might be several alternatives that could be explored by the NCRC to alleviate its needs, without further affecting the neighborhood in such a significant and detrimental way. Between 1981 and 1985, when I served on the NCRC Board, we also confronted issues related to facilities, pressure for increasing enrollment, increasing demand from applicants and the desire to retain the charming "neighborhood" atmosphere of NCRC. The difference that I discern today, from when I served on the Board, is that there is no real neighborhood presence on the current Board. As I understand it, only one Board member currently lives in the neighborhood, but not within close proximity of the facility. When I served, and when my husband proceeded me, the NCRC Board had been consistently made up of a substantial number of neighborhood residents. Some had currently enrolled children in the school, others were former parents and/or "neighborhood" representatives on the Board. While not a majority, we as neighbors had a significant voice in what was being proposed and considered by the school. I recall that those of us from the neighborhood on the Board were referred to as the "Cleveland Park Mafia". My point being that we had a special concern for the welfare of the school AND the neighborhood. Given the current circumstances that we find ourselves in, and the "distrust" that has been engendered over the past several years, I fear that the same balance is no longer maintained.

NCRC today urges you to grant a Special Exception so that they can expand their facilities in part to create a "MOTOR ROOM" for young children to have sufficient space to develop important skills. They point to the lack of space in the current facilities, that the playhouse is too crowded and used for multiple other purposes. We struggled with the same issues in the early 80's. BUT construction of a new building was not the answer then, and need not be the only solution to accommodate this need today. You have already heard that LESS than 100 yards from the NCRC property, the Cleveland Park Club has the entire first floor as a large open room, with a raised stage that could possibly be used by the school for its Motor Development Classes. The Club rents out the space to many different groups, including adult exercise classes, children birthday parties, and teenage dance parties. I am certain the Club would welcome the income from NCRC's use of the space. It's a wonderful neighborhood resource, and should be explored by NCRC as an alternative to the construction of a building that has engendered such unanimous neighborhood opposition.

Likewise, NCRC recently hosted a "Conference" for area teachers and educators. Its vision as a "model child development center" and mission to train others is also part of its justification for now expanding its facilities. But even this

desire could be accomp[redacted]ned in alternative ways. For example, when I served on the NCRC Board, NCRC held annual citywide educational conferences and/or seminars. I recall specifically that on one such occasion NCRC hosted the well known child development expert, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton of the Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital, at an event held at the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church on Nebraska Avenue across from American University. Today, NCRC could likewise achieve its objective by conducting conferences at locations other than its current facility in Cleveland Park.

Moreover, as the prior testimony reflected, currently more than 90% of the children enrolled at NCRC come from outside of the neighborhood, and a substantial number from outside the District. I suspect that the reason so many members of the Board came from Cleveland Park when I served was because their kids were enrolled. Demographics change, populations change, needs change. Perhaps it is time for NCRC to give real consideration to establishing satellite locations in other neighborhoods in the District and/or in adjoining suburbs. This way it could meet the increasing demand for its quality program, develop "model" curriculum for child development centers, train an increasing number of teachers and realize its vision, without creating all of the adverse consequences thatthis proposal does. In short, with a little creativity, there exist other appropriate and certainly more suitable alternatives and approaches that meet the goals of the school and do not adversely affect the neighborhood.

This congested 'in-town' neighborhood can only accommodate an NCRC that is of a limited size without experiencing excessive and dangerous adverse impacts. That limit has already been reached and exceeded. There are clearly alternatives that NCRC could explore to accomplish its objectives without your approval of this proposal. I therefore join DDOT, the ANC, the CPHS, the CPCA and 100 of my neighbors in opposing the NCRC expansion proposal, and I respectfully request that the BZA deny NCRC's pending application.

ThankYou