Evelyn M. Idelson 3035 Newark St. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20008

Statement in OPPOSITION to National Child Research Center Application: BZA Case # 16970

My name is Evelyn Merson Idelson. My family has lived at 3035 Newark St. at the intersection of Newark and Highland Place since 1967. Our two children had a wonderful pre-school experience at NCRC. For many years the school truly was an integral part of our quiet, historic residential neighborhood. We continue to appreciate NCRC's educational quality and support its commitment to increase diversity of students and to serve children with disabilities, but believe this can be accomplished without a major expansion that will further exacerbate the school's current serious adverse impact on its neighbors.

In recent years the school's growth and related growth of vehicle traffic has created an increasingly objectionable condition for residents of our community. Efforts to mitigate this situation have not succeeded to date. To avoid repetition, I wish to strongly second and confirm details provided by many others regarding dangers and obstruction to daily lives caused by current traffic. We need **more** stringent conditions for NCRC to meet the requirements for a special exception as a child development center in our residential neighborhood -- certainly not approval of an expansion that can only worsen existing problems.

NCRC's application is NOT the same as other schools' expansion requests that the Board balances against neighborhood residential concerns. This is a school for very small children, on Highland Place --a narrow curving cul-de-sac -- not a thru traffic street. This quiet little street, with minimal or nonexistent sidewalks --traditionally used for walking, playing, pushing strollers- - is now invaded 5 times daily by giant vehicles which frequently do not comply with the ostensible traffic management requirements. Yes, more people would like to send their kids to NCRC; yes the school may wish for "state of the art" facilities, but this is not an appropriate site for the proposed expansion.

The School's Director testified that the school "has been an integral part of the neighborhood for 73 years". Sadly that is no longer true. For example, in the late 1970's and early '80's, 5 of NCRC's 20 Board members were immediate neighbors of the school: Paula Atkeson at 3141 Highland Place, Cally Irish, 3301 Highland Place, Norton and Cheryl Tenille, 3100 Highland Place, Nancy Harter, 3023 Newark St., Charles Atherton, 3127 Newark St. Today, not one of 22 board members is a near neighbor, and only 1 member lives in Cleveland Park, at some distance from the school. The :friends and "neighbors" who support this application –with perhaps 1 exception—are **not** the immediate and near neighbors who suffer the impact of school traffic.

NCRC enrollment also reflects greatly diminished relationship to the neighborhood. Many many of our children were walked to and from school, which, incidentally, was a significant part of their early childhood development. But school directories from 1995 through 2003 show that in each of those years there were only 12 to 15 students who

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lived close enough so that they reasonably might be walked to school. In the 2002-2003 school year, for example, there were only 15 such children out of an enrollment of 172; the year before, only 12. Yet we know that some neighborhood children who applied were not accepted.

The increased objectionable impact of school traffic on the neighborhood appears to be due to several factors, including: growth of enrollment and staff; significant reduction in neighborhood enrollment; car-seat safety regulations which apparently result in 1 vehicle per child where formerly there were 3-5 child carpools; growing numbers of larger and larger SUV's, inadequate traffic management and careless drivers.

The school does not currently meet legal requirements for a special exception; you have ample documentation of highly objectionable traffic conditions, other objectionable impacts on adjacent and nearby properties, and unsafe conditions for picking up and dropping off children. An overwhelming majority of immediate and near neighbors have verified these objectionable conditions. Surely the regulatory standards require the Board to consider and specify actions to be taken by NCRC to reduce this **current** adverse impact in order to retain a continued special exception in its present facility. Several suggestions for mitigation have been offered, including an increased percentage of children who walk to school.

However, in no case should the legal standards allow approval of this application for expanded facilities, additional students, staff and activities, which unquestionably would *increase* adverse impact on the neighborhood. We respectfully request the Board to reject this application, and take appropriate action to ensure that NCRC fulfills its existing obligation to operate in accordance with special exception requirements.

Thank you.

Evelyn M. Idelson
3035 Newark St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008