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Mr. Geoffrey Griffis, Chair
District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Griffis:

My name is Ellen Fern, and I have three children who have all attended The National Child Research Center (NCRC). To be more precise, my oldest daughter is a 1999 graduate of the school, my oldest son is currently enrolled and hopefully next year, my youngest son will begin his three-year tenure at NCRC. I am writing to you today in support of NCRC's project to improve the school.

While I am not a professional architect, I have carefully reviewed NCRC's proposed plans for the addition to the current school building and the new "carriage house," and I do believe that the design is compatible with the historic character of the site and in keeping with the character of the beautiful historic Cleveland Park district. The new proposed building on the site is designed to appear residential in character and is in keeping with the height and density of other structures in the neighborhood. I believe the architect has done a wonderful job of incorporating both the school's needs and the neighbors' numerous concerns.

My husband and I chose to send our children to NCRC because we believe in the school's mission, and we see every day how the school tries to live its mission. It is a school that believes strongly in doing the best it can for each child, and it also brings together a unique mix of families from different racial, socio-economic backgrounds, as well as a mixture of children with special needs and typically developing children. NCRC's success at integrating these children is very special and for that we are grateful that our children can experience the school. We feel there is no better place for them.

I have been very impressed with NCRC's plans for improving the current facility. Anyone who has spent time there can see the need for more space. There is no place to meet privately with staff members and the only indoor place where the children can work on their gross motor skills is a relatively small room that has glass doors taking up one wall, and library shelves around all the rest of the walls. When you get sixteen four-year-olds in there, throwing balls, hopping, and running, it is clear that the program needs more space. Lastly, since there are at least two children with special needs in each classroom, I feel strongly that taking down the numbers of children in each class makes sense.

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Exhibit No. 40

Board of Zoning Adjustment
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EXHIBIT NO.40

In order to accomplish this and not bring down the size of the current population, the school proposes adding two new classrooms. I think these new classrooms will be extremely beneficial to the program and not simply because they will allow a reduction of the current class sizes. Having these two new classrooms, which are slated to be full-day programs—one for older children and one for younger children—will also offer much more flexibility for working parents, like myself, who need a longer day for their kids.

I have attended all the public community meetings held at NCRC to gather the input of the neighbors, and I admire what NCRC has done in response to neighborhood concerns. This certainly has not been easy. After receiving input at more than a dozen neighborhood meetings, they have cut back the size of the proposed new building significantly. They have already begun to make changes in their traffic management plan, and it is clear that they are working very hard to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts from the dropping off or picking up of children.

I thank you in advance for letting me state how firmly I support the school and its current building proposal. I do hope you also will support their efforts. If you have any concerns, I know anyone at NCRC would be happy to speak with you at any time or to personally show you around the campus so you can see first hand how much we need this new space.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

Ellen S. Fern

Ellen S. Fern
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