Mari Tuma Foret
5069 Overlook Road, NW
Washington, DC 20016
202.363.7480

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2002 DEC -6 PM 4:10

August 1, 2002

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

Dear Mr. Griffis,

I have one son, Derek, who attended NCRC for three years, from 1997 – 2000. I am writing today in support of the National Child Research Center's (NCRC) project to improve the school because the foundation in education he received there was nothing short of incredible; at the same time, as an active parent, I was very aware of the shortage of space for the school's programs and know that their work could be enhanced immeasurably with more adequate space. Derek started the school as a special needs child due to lingering issues related to prematurity. I give large credit to the staff, specialists and curriculum that he left the school as would any other child, with no special issues, on his way to a wonderful education at Maret.

One of the reasons we chose NCRC for our son was because of the homelike environment in a neighborhood surrounding. So I was very interested to understand how this environment could be preserved with additional space. I have carefully reviewed the proposed plans for the addition and new building and and discussed them at length with the Director and Board members. The design is not only compatible with the historic character of the site and in keeping with the character of the historic district but it blends into the residential area beautifully and is in keeping with the height and density of other structures in the neighborhood. The architect has done a wonderful job of accommodating both the school's needs and the neighbors' concerns.

When we looked at preschools, it was critical for us to find one with specialists on staff so that we could give Derek the best start with the least disruption to his day. NCRC was the only school that could give us that kind of foundation. 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 .

The need for meeting space and a better space for motor activities and special needs activities is clear. We often met with teachers outside of classrooms, in

BZA
Case No. 16970
Exhibit No. 51

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.51

the hallways, discussing very private matters about our child. Conversations stopped and started as others passed by. And children often wondered what we were doing. The partnership NCRC offers with parents is so deep, yet there is no space to fully execute it. Likewise, the motor program which is so significant in a child's development is very cramped. Innovative ideas proposed by the motor teacher just can't be executed. Speech and physical therapy sessions are difficult to schedule because of the small rooms available. The special needs children would benefit so incredibly by additional space...what a wonderful gift to our community!

Lastly, since there are at least two children with special needs in each classroom, taking down the numbers of children is a necessity. 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 who need to have their children in a supervised and stimulating environment for a longer period of the day.

I admire what NCRC has done in response to neighborhood concerns. 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 firmly support the school and hope you also will support their efforts. The demands on independent schools today and the amount of resulting construction are great. In my mind, this is the most important renovation proposal on the table. Not only will it better serve current students, but better serve the entire community. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mari Tuma Foret
Past NCRC Parent
Ward 3 Resident