July 13, 2003

Chairman Geoffrey Griffis
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210-S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Chairman Griffis,

I am writing to you in reference to case number 17022. I am a Burke parent, though not a resident of Washington, D.C. I reside in Montgomery County, Maryland where my husband and I have done business for over 30 years. However, when we decided to send our son to a private school, we specifically searched for a school in Washington, D.C. We wanted the urban environment and all of the activities and diversity that an urban environment can offer versus a suburban school location. We chose Burke not just because of the Washington, D.C. setting, but also because it is a school that aggressively seeks diversity among its students and is a school that teaches that community service is as important as academics.

Burke is a good neighbor to the Upton Street community. The school is kept in good condition and is one of the nicer looking sites on the street. The students are respectful of the physical neighborhood and of the neighbors. The school has initiated a new drop-off program in the morning so as to keep any additional traffic off of the street. Burke has developed a reduced enrollment growth plan and has shared these plans with the neighborhood. Burke has for over 30 years also been a good neighbor to the D.C. area at large. Among D.C. area private schools, Burke has one of the highest percentages of D.C. students receiving financial aid. Each year, students in all grades participate in community service projects arranged by the school. All projects involve service within Washington, D.C.

I am not surprised at the small group of neighbors opposing Burke's physical expansion. I am however surprised by the amount of time taken and consideration shown by Washington, D.C. governmental bodies for their exaggerated complaints. These neighbors moved into a community already dominated by several educational institutions. They moved into a neighborhood not just near to but adjoining Connecticut Avenue, one of the busiest streets in the District. Yet, they complain about traffic, blaming much of the traffic problem on Burke. Burke had, prior to the new traffic plan, contributed a limited amount of traffic on the street for about 30-45 minutes per day, five days per week. Even then, the amount of Burke traffic must have been an insignificant part of the problem as Burke students are a small part of the neighboring population when considering Howard Law, UDC, Intelsat, and the surrounding residential and business people parking in the neighborhood, and considering that many Burke students use public transportation to come and go to school. I am also surprised that the small group protesting the expansion of Burke's facilities has not considered the alternatives, such as an apartment building which could significantly increase street traffic throughout the day and week.

Mr. Chairman, Burke is a good representative for D.C. schools and a good neighbor to D.C. Burke has enabled many Washingtonians who work and want to live in D.C. to do so knowing that there is a safe, diverse, enriching school for their children. Burke deserves the opportunity to improve its facilities. No one will be inconvenienced. No one will be disadvantaged. Many will benefit and thrive. Please show your concern for the majority of the community by approving Burke's appeal for development of the new facilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Arlene Hillerson

BZA
Case No. 17022
Exhibit No. 103

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17022
EXHIBIT NO. 103