May 11, 2005

BZA #17304

To: The D.C. City Council,
Board of Zoning Adjustment, Mr. Griffis
Advisory Neighborhood Commissions of Wards 7 CO3 and 7D, and
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency

Dear Chairperson, Agency and Department Heads, other officials, and Ms. Catherine Woods:

I am writing to voice strong opposition to the building and/or establishment in this area of a facility planned by CSOSA that would service ex-offenders, and certainly not at the proposed site near the Benning Road Metro and Parking Lot. Such services should be in commercial well-protected business and non residential areas downtown, not next to our homes and children.

My opposition is **not** that of a newcomer to the area or that of an opportunistic business person with an ulterior agenda. I come from a long line of home owners, relatives who came to Ward 7CO3 in the 1920's and have continued to own homes, walk, drive, ride bikes and sleds, live and pay taxes here and in neighboring Wards. We have seen its ups and downs.

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I can tell you we have lamented the area's deterioration. It has been helped along by the inappropriate services such as those in a similar office building at the corner of Division and Burroughs Avenues. My grandparents were members at Sargent Memorial . . . Church near that intersection. The surrounding blight is heartbreaking to those of us who knew the vitality of the area in years before its arrival.

It appears that the pattern of perpetuating blight in that and nearby Wards is satisfactory with the folk downtown, but it is not what we want who live and pay taxes here. The area of the proposed new building for CSOSA is already in a state of disrepair> It is seen in the peeling paint on the landmark Shrimp Boat building that would be across the street from the proposed CSOSA site. That deteriorating eyesore (Shrimp Boat) was reported to the D.C. Government approximately two years ago with requests for getting that business to keep itself in a presentable state, but to no avail. Besides its run down appearance, it helps supply the trash strewn all over Central Avenue including the lot behind it, and contributes to the general unsightliness that brings down property values.

By the nature of the business of the proposed new building and agency near the Metro site, we can be assured that its presence would not result in sustained beautification and improvement of the area. Instead it almost guarantees more blight and furtherance of the deterioration with increased traffic congestion, parking violations, loitering, threats to the safety of residents both children and adults, increased trash and graffiti, and a potential increase in crime by people needing their substance fixes. They need treatment but not at the expense of a residential area.

We in Ward 7CO3 and surrounding areas cannot stand worsening of our community, not by one bit more! The balance now is much too fragile to absorb that type of heavy drain on our community. We are already in need of Intensive Critical Care type services. Worsening or increasing those needs would lead to death of a community.

BZA
Case No. 17304
Exhibit No. 54

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17304
EXHIBIT NO. 54

Presently, our home is within four blocks of the proposed building construction. I speak for myself and some neighbors, especially elderly ones who would be afraid to use the Benning Road Metro if the proposed construction and use prevail. This fear would be an automatic consequence added to the problems of overloading the area with too many people, cars, and problems.

I believe we can foresee a time when we would be forced to avoid that entire area the same as some now try to avoid driving through or stopping at the stop light area near Division and Burroughs. However, because of its strategic location near East Capitol Street, avoiding the Benning Road, Central Avenue area would be all but an impossibility for those of us living in the nearby community. Even commuters would fear that intersection. The result would be to exit the area.

It might be more beneficial to consider putting in a computer store and copy center, a bike shop, a healthy food restaurant, a small park, or other helpful and needed services there instead.

I strongly believe that erecting that building for use by CSOSA or some similar service is simply a way of removing long time tax paying residents who have deep roots in our community, whose families are trying to revitalize it while not destroying the memories of their families, their roots, and better days.

We need your help working for our community's improvement, not our demise. Please vote NO and eradicate plans for putting CSOSA services near the Benning Road Metro. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ms. Marshall, in the 100 block of 49th Street N.E.