

Testimony of Rami Rihani (1505 Emerson St. NW)

BZA Case #19581 (Latin American Montessori Bilingual Charter School)

November 15, 2017

Good Morning Mr. Chair, Commissioners:

My name is Rami (R-A-M-I) Rihani (R-I-H-A-N-I) and I reside at 1505 Emerson St. NW. I am a person with standing in this case as I live directly at the southwest corner of the Kingsbury Center property, at the intersection of Emerson St. NW and Piney Branch Road NW. I've lived in the District of Columbia for the last 19 years, and at my current home for almost the last 8 years.

Let me start off by saying that I welcome the LAMB school into our neighborhood and am encouraged to see their proposed conditions of approval, as submitted in Exhibit 36B. Nevertheless, I am in opposition of their application, as it is written now, given their objective to accommodate a maximum of 600 students and 110 faculty/staff, as stated in Exhibit 14.

I am particularly concerned about traffic. In looking at the LAMB 2015-2016 annual report (Exhibit 105), they state on page 5 that only 50% of their student population lives in Ward 4, and later on page 16, they list the count of students per grade, from which it can be deduced that 47% of students are in early childhood classrooms (PK-3, PK-4, and KG) and 53% are in elementary grades 1 through 5. The specific student household locations are further illustrated in the map presented in Exhibit 96. These numbers do not support statements that “*many of LAMB’s families already reside in Ward 4, which means that many students will be able to walk or bike to school.*”

Traffic issues are still fresh on our minds on the 1300 to 1600 blocks of Emerson Street NW after a year-long conversation with DDOT that resulted in controlling the dramatic and dangerous increase in traffic that we witnessed on Emerson Street. Given LAMB's student population location and grade distributions, I am afraid that we may return to those unfavorable conditions, and believe the best way to mitigate it is to phase in the student increase so that LAMB can demonstrate to the neighborhood that it is a good neighbor and that it comes back to the BZA once it plans to increase to its peak student volume of 600.