

November 10, 2017

Rami and Elizabeth Rihani
1505 Emerson Street NW
Washington, DC 20011

Chairman Fred Hill or Current Chairman
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Opposition to Specific Features of Application #19581: Latin American Montessori Bilingual (LAMB) Public Charter School Application to Increase the Number of Students from 300 to 600 at 5000 14th St NW

We, Rami and Elizabeth Rihani, live at 1505 Emerson Street NW, which sits at the northeast corner of Emerson and Piney Branch St NW. Our back yard is just across the narrow alley from Kingsbury's back and side yard on the south side of the campus. We are not opposed to the idea of another school occupying the building with Kingsbury. That said, we are very concerned about the certain increase of traffic on the streets surrounding the school if the student and staff population grows to 600.

In July 2017, the 1300-1600 blocks of Emerson completed a year-long conversation with DDOT and Councilman Brandon Todd's office about the dramatic and dangerous uptick in traffic along our street since early 2016. Navigation apps and the closure of part of Rock Creek Parkway and Beach Drive brought 2700 cars a day up and down Emerson Street, a DDOT-defined "local road" that is expected to see a maximum of 300-500 cars a day. There was almost daily property damage to cars parked on the street, and daily near misses with cars travelling at high speed in opposite directions on a street too narrow to accommodate that many vehicles at once. We and our daughters often had to wait to get into our car in the morning because of the speed, volume and unsafe proximity of morning rush hour traffic on Emerson.

The result of that conversation and related traffic study concluded with DDOT creating new one-way traffic patterns eastbound from 14th to 13th on Emerson, and westbound from 14th to 16th. Since that change, however, the traffic along Piney Branch from Emerson to Gallatin has seen a dramatic increase of its own, with far more cars heading up and down Piney Branch during peak commuting times. It became clear very quickly that DDOT's solution for our street's traffic issue was not one that took into account traffic patterns in the community at large.

As such, we are concerned about the potential congestion and backup on Piney Branch with LAMB's proposed student population and believe that any plans to allow entry or exit of vehicles on Piney Branch during morning drop off or afternoon pick up from the Kingsbury/LAMB property will have significant detrimental effects on the community. Piney Branch is an unimproved road with no pedestrian walkways, no parking lanes in either direction and is frequently restricted to one lane of travel with cars parked along it.

Related to traffic issues is parking. Because our daughters attend a large middle school in NW DC, we are very aware of the parking issues special events such as fundraisers, parent/teacher conference days, and weekend family days can create in the surrounding community. If we cannot park on school property for our daughters' events, there are several public parking options that allow us not to impact the residential streets around the school. There are no other public parking options for Kingsbury/LAMB parents – they will have to park on neighborhood streets if campus parking is full. With our neighborhood also home to other schools, sports facilities and religious institutions that hold special events in the evening and on the weekends, it is impossible to imagine that visitor parking during schoolwide events for 600 students would not severely tax already crowded neighborhood streets.

We should stress again that we are not opposed to LAMB's move to the Kingsbury property, but we feel that the concerns of the neighbors over the traffic and noise impacts of the proposed move have not been adequately addressed. We support the Office of Planning report issued on November 3, and we urge the BZA to make any increase in the allowed number of students at 5000 14th St NW to be contingent on developing a transportation plan that addresses the current and certain future impacts of traffic volume on Piney Branch, Emerson, Gallatin and surrounding residential streets.

Respectfully,

Rami and Elizabeth Rihani