

Frederick L. Hill, Chairman of the BZA
441 4th St. NW, Suite 200 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: BZA Case 19659, Application for Zoning Relief of the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB)

Dear Mr. Hill and Other Members of the Board:

I am writing to oppose the application of the FSMB to convert the property at 2118 Leroy Place NW to a headquarters for their organization. My wife Jane and I live with our two very young (2 years old and 10 months old) daughters approximately 100 feet up the block at 2132 Leroy Place NW. We have lived in the neighborhood for two years now and are concerned about the ongoing pressure on Leroy Place and other blocks in Kalorama from businesses which seek to convert residential properties to commercial use.

Overall, this is a question of the preservation of Kalorama as a wonderful, distinctive residential neighborhood in close proximity to Dupont Circle and downtown Washington. Kalorama is under ongoing pressure to open itself up to commercial uses for a variety of reasons. Specifically, commercial businesses will continue to seek variances in Kalorama because of its proximity to the city center, the existence of large residences that can accommodate commercial uses, and the fact that various diplomatic missions have partly converted numerous residences in the neighborhood (often with little or no input from the BZA, the Sheridan-Kalorama neighborhood association, or local residents). Jane and I are generally concerned about the changes to our block that occur with non-residential uses. The diplomatic missions on our block are, frankly, terrible neighbors. They show no concern for disruption to parking and traffic patterns, generally engage in poor maintenance of their buildings, and are often rude and unhelpful when asked to assist their neighbors. The Nepalese embassy across the street flooded the basement of our neighbors the Hurvitzes when they left a hose running, and were entirely unhelpful in tracking down one of my packages that was misdelivered to the embassy. The presence of these diplomatic missions is doubly problematic, insofar as they serve as the beachhead for other commercial uses that seek to piggyback on their buildings after the leave. That is at the core of this particular application for a variance; had the Colombians not used it as a chancery, and partially converted it to non-residential use, it would not have been targeted by the FSMB. This allows commercial businesses seeking to locate in our neighborhood to use vacated diplomatic properties as beachheads. If left unchecked, this could turn Kalorama into a mixed commercial/residential neighborhood in a short period of time.

While I cannot speak to the virtues or vices of the FSMB, as they have not moved in, I am generally concerned about certain aspects of their application. They relate that they currently have a staff of eight, but make no commitment about the size of their staff upon move-in to 2118 Leroy Place. Surely they will expand their staff commensurate with the size of the new building. Moreover, they could choose to sell the building in a

few years, and a new tenant would have the benefit of the variance that conveys with the property. The problem we face in Kalorama is that we live among many grand residences, most of which remain residential. In its application for a variance, the FSMB leans heavily on the size of 2118 Leroy Place, noting that it is well over 5000 square feet. If that were a reason to permit a variance, dozens of residences across Kalorama would be subject to commercial conversion by dint of size alone. The mere fact that Kalorama has an unusually high proportion of large single family homes should not mean that its residential character is at risk. Jane and I enjoy the peaceful character of our block, and especially enjoy the safe environment for our young daughters. These benefits would be diminished by commercial encroachment.

Thank you very much for your consideration of our concerns, and please contact us as needed for any follow-up questions.

Sincerely,

Paul Nitze
2132 Leroy Place NW
Washington, D.C. 20008