

Clifford and Michele Bond
4120 42nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20016

**Re: BZA Case # 20472 – Opposition to The River School Proposal to
Rezone 4220 Nebraska Avenue (i.e., the Buchanan Estate)**

October 20, 2021

Dear Chairman Hill and Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment:

We are writing to state our opposition to the River School application for zoning exceptions, Case #20472, for relocation and expansion to 4220 Nebraska Avenue, NW. This opposition is based, inter alia, on our experience in terms of traffic, congestion, and safety in the neighborhood.

Our home, which we have occupied for more than 30 years, is less than 100 feet across Van Ness Street from the Buchanan property. When we first moved here, our doorbell was regularly rung by drivers wanting to use our home phone to report accidents at nearby intersections. With mobile phones now common, this is less of a problem, but we still hear the collisions and see the arrival of police and emergency vehicles in response. This is a regular occurrence and the MPD Second District can confirm the high incidence of accidents at the intersections of Warren and Nebraska, Van Ness and Nebraska and Van Ness and 42nd Street which surround the Buchanan property. River School's relocation there and its plans to expand enrollment and traffic at this new site will only exacerbate an already existing problem.

The River School has offered a traffic plan to mitigate these concerns, but its assumptions and proposals are insufficient and not convincing. National Presbyterian School (NPS), which is across Nebraska from our home, has a smaller enrollment, but it regularly has long lines of traffic at times of drop off and pick up of students. It can accommodate these long lines without interfering with local traffic because of the extensive roadways, parking lot and grounds of the

National Presbyterian Church, which is associated with the school and located beside it. The inevitable result of River School's additional traffic will be an overflow of cars at peak traffic periods on to Nebraska Avenue. River School has made proposals for busing students to reduce the traffic flow, but the reality is that many of its expanded student body will be under 3 years old. We understand that River School has no plans to bus these very young children, nor should it.

The size and scope of River School with its expanded student body, staff and faculty and the establishment of a "clinic" along with teaching and administrative buildings is far too large for the 2.27 acres of the estate. The school also plans to retain buildings associated with the Buchanan mansion. The resulting density of structures and total school population will be greater than most comparable private schools in the District of Columbia, including the neighboring NPS, with an inevitable negative impact on traffic and safety.

The Buchanan property is currently zoned as R-1-B, a residential property in a residential zone. The proposed construction would change the character of the neighborhood. That and safety concerns are why so many residential property owners are opposed to it. River School's current design plans propose constructing very functional and institutional structures and would eliminate the current leafy canopy over the property. This reinforces our esthetic concerns about its impact on the neighborhood. Why would the District replace taxable residential property for a non-profit that pays no taxes? Why punish local neighbors who have chosen to live and raise families in the District by permitting this rezoning? We bear no ill will toward the school, but this is not the right location for this institution.

River School representatives have expressed a readiness to work with the local community to develop performance measures, monitoring plans, sanctions and even to pay for transportation mitigation actions in the area around the Buchanan estate. Neighborhood groups have worked to develop community agreements in the past along these lines

for other projects. Our experience, however, is that once a school or development is in place, these have proven impossible to enforce.

For these reasons and others that may be brought forward at a future BZA meeting, we ask that you not approve Case #2047.

Respectfully,
Cliff and Michele Bond