

Jenny Backus and Ed Pagano
5841 Nebraska Ave NW
Washington DC 20015

February 2, 2022

Chairperson Frederick L. Hill
Bureau of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 2000S

Dear Chair Hill and distinguished members of the Bureau of Zoning Adjustment,

We write today to urge you to support BZA Application #20643: Maret School Athletics Field Project. This proposed partnership between The Episcopal Center for Children (ECC) and Maret School will help serve children from across this city by providing vital educational and recreational opportunities, will help preserve important green space in our neighborhood here along Nebraska Ave and in our ANC district, will allow a community institution, The ECC, to open its doors to students once again, and will make our community stronger, more inclusive and more family-friendly.

For the past twenty-one years, our family has lived at 5841 Nebraska Ave, directly across from the proposed new field site. We have loved listening to the students who attended the ECC play outside on the fields, enjoyed meeting the faculty and staff as they parked their cars along Nebraska Ave, and have proudly worked to create opportunities for the neighborhood to support the students and the mission of the ECC over the past ten years, whether it was working to bring the Lafayette Spring Fair to the grounds of the ECC or organizing book and coat drives for ECC students. When the ECC shut its doors to students, it was a loss for both the larger community and our neighborhood. This new partnership will save the ECC, allowing students in need from across the region to receive services and counseling again on campus and preserving the beautiful green space that so many of us have enjoyed throughout the years.

This partnership will also create another precious commodity for our city, more fields for youth sports. Our son Jack, who attended Lafayette, Deal and is now a sophomore at Maret, played soccer, baseball, tag football and frisbee when he was younger, and we witnessed firsthand the appalling lack of field space for kids across DC in almost every Ward, often driving for hours to games. As a rising junior, Jack will probably not get to use this new ECC field very much as a Maret student, but we are excited that the younger children of this city from every school will now have more options when it comes to playing sports. We hope that the ANC will advocate and encourage more usage of the proposed football/baseball/soccer field for local schools and youth sports groups.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.20643
EXHIBIT NO.120

We also want to make sure that you all know that there are many families like ours who live close to the ECC who support this partnership. We know loud voices sometimes drown out the voices of others. There have been assertions about traffic, about Maret and the ECC's plans, and claims about potential field usage that simply do not equate with the facts. . This proposal is not creating another Carter Baron or a super sports complex where scores of people will be flooding the neighborhood. It is creating a new youth sports field for a city that desperately needs more green spaces and helping our neighborhood preserve a beautiful open space.

The ECC, Maret, and the ANC have dedicated hours in the neighborhood, answering questions and concerns, making adjustments, and looking for solutions. After carefully reviewing Maret's plans and taking part in all of their numerous community input sessions, we think that they have listened to the concerns of the neighborhood and have presented a balanced plan that will meet everyone's concerns.

Lastly, as much as we all in this neighborhood feel like we own this space, this is private property and it is totally appropriate and fitting that these two educational institutions have created this partnership. When the ECC closed its doors, we feared for the worst. Visions of condos, high-rises, and McMansions destroying the view out of our front window danced in our heads. We are so glad the ECC decided to team up with Maret and keep the property centered and focused on education and recreation for children. It is the best outcome we could have hoped for and we need your help to ensure this partnership is approved, supported, and endorsed by the City.

As some of the property owners most directly impacted by this proposed partnership, we want you to know we support it strongly, we think it will strengthen our community, help our property values and make our neighborhood healthier, stronger, and more diverse for years to come.

Please feel free to contact us at any time if you have any questions about why we support the partnership and thank you for your consideration. We very much appreciate your dedicated efforts and leadership on behalf of the residents of this ANC District.

Sincerely,

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CC: The Honorable Janeese Lewis George, Commissioner for Ward 4