

Testimony in Opposition to Application 21250 (Applicant: Fikremariam Mengesha)

This written testimony is jointly being provided by Dorothy Johnson (7420 Eastern Ave NW) and Gena Johnson (7497 7th St NW). Our properties are located across the alley from 7410 Eastern Ave. We are requesting that the Zoning Board deny this application for a special exemption. We implore the Board to help conserve and protect the long-term stability of this neighborhood. Here are some of the rationale to support the denial:

1) Lack of Demonstrated Need and Benefit to Neighborhood

The applicant has failed to detail the research conducted to determine the need for this type of facility in the proposed location. The demographics for Ward 4, in accordance with data on the Office of Planning website, shows the median age in the ward to be under 40 and 10% of the population has a disability. Is the plan to serve the neighborhood or to house people from across the District, Maryland or Virginia? If the intention is to help seniors age in place, why would seniors not want to stay in their current homes adapted for their needs and/or with in-home care, rather than residing in such a small facility? Who the applicant is trying to serve and the benefit to the neighborhood is unclear.

2) Zoning Consistency and Land Use Compatibility

Under the District's zoning regulations, single-family residential areas are designated for use primarily as homes. Converting the house in question to a healthcare facility, especially one for 14 patients, fundamentally changes the character of the area. The proposed healthcare facility would likely introduce a more intensive use of the property than what is intended by the zoning for single-family residential areas. Zoning laws are designed to preserve the residential nature of neighborhoods and to avoid the introduction of uses that might disrupt that character. There are already single-family homes that have been converted to such use in the neighborhood, including 7416 Blair Rd NW and 7425 8th St NW. This additional exemption for a healthcare facility increases the commercialization of property in the neighborhood. Note that the home next door to this property (7408) is owned by an LLC associated with the owner of the home healthcare agency at 7506 Georgia Ave NW.

3) Parking Concerns

This residential property is not equipped with sufficient on-site and on-street parking to accommodate the demand created by a healthcare facility. There is only one on-site parking space in the front of the property and the one on-street parking space in front of the property is in a RPP zone. Parking restrictions are in effect from 7AM to Midnight, Monday through Saturday. There is no parking from the left side (when facing the property) of the driveway for 7410 to the intersection at Blair Road. There is already stress on parking availability by residents in the nearby Maryland apartment complexes in

the evenings and on weekends. The current facility plans do not address where staff and visitors will park given the RPP and No Parking restrictions, as well as space for delivery vehicles and medical transport vehicles.

4) Proper Trash Disposal

There appears to be no viable solution for proper trash disposal. City provided trash cans are kept in the alley 24/7 which is inconsistent with city requirements. A healthcare facility would be expected to generate more trash and possible trash requiring special disposal procedures such as medical waste. Unlike the Blair Road facility at the other end of the alley towards Geranium Street, there is no space behind the property for container storage that is not located in public space. How trash will be handled is a significant concern that need to be addressed. The applicant proposes pick up six (6) times per week which is substantially more than the current one (1) time per week, creating more noise and disruption.

5) Noise and Privacy Concerns

Healthcare facilities often have higher activity levels, with patients, staff, and visitors coming and going at various hours. This could create a level of noise, traffic, and disruption that is inconsistent with the quiet enjoyment expected in a residential area. Single-family homes in residential areas often provide a higher level of privacy. The introduction of a healthcare facility could erode this privacy for surrounding residents particularly where the facility's medical personnel or visitors may need to access the property frequently. Privacy has already been negatively impacted. The owner has already installed a number of exterior cameras which appear to face into neighbors' yards. At the least, the applicant should be required to install a privacy fence on the alley side to shield their activities from the neighbors.

6) Potential Impact on Property Values

The conversion of this single-family home to a healthcare facility, given all the other conversions, may reduce the desirability of the area for future homeowners, potentially causing a decrease in property values. Residential property buyers often seek neighborhoods with peaceful, residential character. The introduction of another healthcare facility would distract from that atmosphere.

In conclusion, allowing this exemption would undermine the integrity of the zoning system which is designed to balance land uses and protect residential areas from being overtaken by non-residential or intensive institutional uses. Please protect our neighborhood and deny the exemption.