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application by Aidan Montessori School (case #21400)

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From Hans Israelsson <hisraelsson@gmail.com>

Date Mon 1/12/2026 1:58 PM

To DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ) <DCOZ-BZASubmissions@dc.gov>

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Bzasubmissions@dc.gov

Dear Members of the Zoning Board,

I am writing regarding the application by Aidan Montessori School (case #21400) to increase its building footprint beyond the zoning regulation that limits lot occupancy to 40%, specifically by an additional 7%.

The practical consequence of this proposed variance is the further reduction of an already undersized playground. As a result, the amount of outdoor space per enrolled student would fall dramatically below prevailing guidelines and widely accepted expert recommendations.

An estimate derived from the architect's own drawings suggests that the proposed plan would reduce playground space to roughly 16 square feet per enrolled student, assuming the school reaches its current maximum enrollment of 180. For context, I believe that New York City—hardly known for extravagant spatial indulgence—sets a

Board of Zoning Adjustment  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO. 21400  
EXHIBIT NO. 20

guideline of 30 square feet per pupil for primary and intermediate schools, explicitly calculated on a per-student basis.

The spatial shortfall has already produced an improvised solution: the school's apparent reliance on a grass area across the street belonging to a private apartment complex. This area, it should be noted, also functions—by long-standing custom—as a dog park. Observing children happily rolling about in a space regularly used by neighborhood dogs may be charming to some, but it raises questions about hygiene, supervision, liability, and basic common sense.

In addition to these concerns, the school bus—apparently used only infrequently—has taken up semi-permanent residence in a non-metered public parking space across the street. These spaces are ostensibly intended for general public use, not long-term storage of underutilized institutional vehicles. This arrangement further strains neighborhood resources while offering little evident benefit.

Taken together, these issues suggest not an isolated request for flexibility, but a pattern of expansion unmoored from the physical realities of the site and the surrounding neighborhood. Zoning limits exist precisely to prevent this kind of incremental overreach, where each small exception is defended as harmless until the cumulative effect is anything but.

I respectfully urge the Board to consider whether granting this variance would serve the interests of students, neighbors, or the broader community—or whether it would merely reward planning by afterthought.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hans Israelsson

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