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I am here tonight at the request of the governing board of St. Columba's Church, of which I am a member. The church is located at the corner of 42nd and Albemarle Streets N.W., about three blocks from the American Tower Corporation's construction site.

St. Columba's is an active parish of about 3,100 members, many of whom are on the premises at some point nearly every day, along with our staff. We have evening activities involving the broader community. St. Columba's Nursery School is attended by about 90 children under the age of five, and our six-week summer camp is attended by about the same number of children under the age of eight. We also sponsor and work closely with Iona Senior Services and the Friendship Terrace retirement home, both of which are adjacent. So we are naturally concerned about any potentially adverse effects of this telecommunications tower, or any similar tower, on the neighborhood.

As you know, our neighborhood by virtue of its elevation already has a disproportionate number of communications towers of various kinds, including the NBC and Navy towers on Nebraska Avenue, the WTTG tower on Wisconsin Avenue, and the WJLA/WUSA and Western Union towers at 41st and Brandywine, plus the FAA radar unit on Fort Reno as well as various wireless antennas and towers in the immediate vicinity.

We are not experts on the electromagnetic exposures associated with these towers nor on the hazards they may pose to public health, but given the composition of the community, the close proximity of numerous existing towers, and some apparent uncertainty about their public health effects, we think it only makes sense to proceed with great caution in determining the suitability of adding still more towers to the neighborhood.

Like our neighbors, we were surprised by American Tower's construction project when it got under way last year and we remain concerned about the lack of opportunity for public input and objective review of public concerns. We believe that any construction of this kind should be carefully considered in the light of the best available information about electromagnetic exposures and risks. The location of this prominent tower in the middle of a commercial block, with minimal setbacks from the street and adjacent businesses, is also a concern that we think should have been carefully considered prior to granting approval.

We hope that improved zoning regulations on antennas and antenna towers will include clear provisions for public notice and a public hearing under the special exception process before new antennas and towers can be approved for this or any other neighborhood in the District. We believe that the Zoning Commission should be guided in part by a careful review of health and safety concerns and among other considerations should ensure that total radiofrequency radiation levels are within Federal Communications Commission limits before approving any new applications.

We appreciate the difficult task faced by the Commission in trying to protect public safety and health as well as the character of our communities while also trying to accommodate demand for new and expanding telecommunications services. We ask only that the process be made as cautious, careful, fair and transparent as possible, and that community concerns be given at least as much weight as commercial considerations. Thank you.

ZONING COMMISSION
CASE NO. 01-02-TA
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District of Columbia
CASE NO. 01-02
EXHIBIT NO. 9