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February 1, 2003

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Ms. Carol Mitten, Chair
Zoning Commission
Suite 220
441 Fourth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

**RE: Case No. 02-32, Georgetown University Performing Arts Center**

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Board:

I thank the board for the opportunity to testify both via oral and written testimony at the January 16th hearing regarding the Performing Arts Center. As a former Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner in the single member district which represents both West Georgetown and a portion of Georgetown University, the Performing Arts Center represents an important step forward for my neighborhood. After reviewing the testimony of the Burleith Citizen's Association (BCA), I feel obligated to submit additional testimony in order to respond to some of the inaccurate claims that have been made regarding our community.

The BCA's inference that university students have recently overtaken the surrounding neighborhood is both baseless and unfair to the student community. In her testimony, Mrs. Bonnie Hardy states that, "our community has witnessed a trend from single family homes…to group houses with parking pads". In fact, the number of undergraduates living in the surrounding neighborhood has significantly decreased over the past year, with 538 students living in Burleith in 2000 and 454 living their in 2002. Due to the construction of a 750 bed dormitory, Georgetown University will be able to house nearly 90% of its undergraduate population on its campus in 2003.

A minority of Georgetown students have lived in the surrounding community for decades. As citizens of this city, the right to own or rent property is fully protected by law. This is the aspect of the BCA's testimony that troubles me the most: *the BCA's testimony appears to assert that students are an undesirable portion of the community and that efforts should be undertaken to drive students out of the neighborhood.* In her testimony, Mrs. Hardy states, "if the ease of bringing a car into the city is taken away, there might be less incentive for students to stay in the neighborhood". As a protected class under the DC Human Rights Act, students should enjoy the same right as any other citizen to be able to freely choose a place of residence without interference from others.

Any systematic effort to drive university students out of the neighborhood is both capricious and discriminatory. From the above referenced testimony, it seems clear to me that the real motivating factor in the BCA's testimony regarding "compliance" does not stem from an altruistic concern about insurance premiums or city tax revenues, but to encourage students to leave the surrounding community. It is important to note that the BCA's effort to catalog out-of-state vehicles did not encompass all the out-of-state vehicles in our neighborhood, but merely what Mrs. Hardy referred to as "cars parked behind houses that I believe are rented by University students". If their real goal was to decrease the number of out-of-state vehicles housed in the city, the effort would not discriminate between citizens and would have included the significant number of non-student neighbors who fail to register their vehicle in DC.

Zoning Commission
District of Columbia
Case 02-32
Exhibit 46

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-32
EXHIBIT NO.46

While the BCA's testimony attempts to portray student impact on the community as mainly detrimental, it is important to note the significant positive contributions that university students make in the city. The 50,000 plus full-time voting aged students that are enrolled at Universities in the District contribute an estimated $4 billion to the DC economy. However, **the real impact of Georgetown students is found in the arena of community service activities.** More than 1,400 Georgetown students (about 25% of the student body) are currently involved in weekly service projects in Washington, D.C. Despite the efforts of a few neighborhood activists to depict students as blight on the neighborhood, my experience in the community has been that a majority of local residents enjoy the presence of a top flight national University in their backyard. By all accounts there is still additional progress to be made on issues of student conduct, but in the past few years there has been tremendous strides toward rectifying such issues (please refer to the testimony of Lt. Brian Bray and to my Jan. 16th testimony). The March 2002 and June 2002 edition of the Burleith Citizens Newsletter even commented on the improvement of student conduct over the past years.

I thank the Board for the additional opportunity to present testimony on this important application.

Sincerely,

Justin Wagner

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

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# HERE COMES A FAX

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REGARDING:

PLEASE Find attached a 2 PAGE LETTER TO BE OFFERED FOR TESTIMONY

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