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Anthony Hood, Chairperson
D.C. Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210-S
Washington, DC 20001
zcsubmissions@dc.gov

**Re: Z.C. Case No. 06-11L: Hillel at the George Washington University
Letter of Support**

Dear Chairperson Hood and Members of the Commission:

My name is Dina Newman and I am an alumna of the George Washington University and current Master's student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. I am writing to you in support of the George Washington University Hillel's proposed new building.

I cannot even begin to adequately express what GW Hillel has meant to me. At a school of over 30,000 students, I found a home on the corner of 23rd and H street. I left my real home to attend GW at a very difficult time in my personal life, when my older brother was suffering from a recurrence of a brain tumor. At the time I wasn't even sure I felt capable of staying at a school so far from home until I found Hillel. I walked in to that corner building because in addition to being a scared little freshmen, I felt helpless in my family situation-- I went to pray. The staff and students there took me under their wing and allowed me to talk about what was going on in my life. They supported me, and said the prayer for healing for my brother standing by my side. On the day of his surgery a number of students and staff even checked in to make sure I was alright. For the love and support in just that year, I am forever indebted to GW Hillel. That year soon came to a close, with the relief of my brother's renewed health, but it was not the end of my involvement at Hillel.

In fact, Hillel made such an immense mark on me that it changed my entire life's path. I slowly became interested in Jewish life both in a personal and academic way. And though I had planned to pursue a career either in theater or psychology, I began taking Judaic studies courses. GW Hillel showed me that the Jewish community was so much more than prayer from an ancient book. The creativity that occurred within the walls of that building showed me what Judaism is really all about: continuity. The continuity of the Jewish faith relies on the ability to constantly reinvent the religion and culture. It's a concept I found so beautiful and inspiring that I opted to instead pursue a career in the academic study of Jewish Culture and as a Jewish Youth

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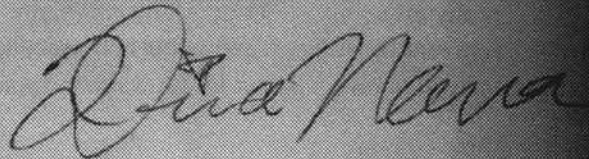
Professional. When I look back fondly on my days at GW, it occurs to me that I spent more time at Hillel than I did in my own dorm room! I served on numerous committees, attended hundreds of shabbats, and stayed up many a late night studying for finals at our bi-annual "Cram Jam".

I loved every moment I spent in that building, but it was no longer in good shape by the time it became my home away from home, and it has only continued to deteriorate. It often became a running joke that the ceiling in the basement dining room was beginning to fall in on us. Hillel does amazing things regardless of the condition of the facilities... but imagine what they could do for their students and the greater GW community if they had a better facility! During my time serving as a board member of the Jewish Student Association, we often ran into conflicts due to the lack of space. The Jewish student body at GW is large and the programming at Hillel is diverse and dynamic- on any given night we ran anywhere from 2-4 different (and popularly attended) events simultaneously. But these events were often constrained and even forced into using alternate "creative" spaces to accommodate their attendance. Another aspect as a member of JSA board was our partnership with other GW organizations. Every GW Hillel student is simultaneously involved in a number of other organizations on campus and during my time there we often helped our other organizations to use Hillel facilities. A prime example of Hillel's use for other organizations is the collaborative screening of the film "Prayer with Lior" that I planned in conjunction with Disability Services, and the sororities that use the facility for recruitment preparations. On the academic side of things, the GW Judaic Studies department, in which I was a major, used the facility frequently. Thus bettering GW Hillel will be a much larger contribution to the GW community at large. In addition to planned and structured programming needs, GW Hillel is meant to be a hang out space. But, because of the deteriorating conditions over the years since my freshmen year fewer and fewer students have hung around which is a disservice not only to Hillel but to the students themselves. The planned renovations to GW Hillel will benefit the student body in too many ways to count!

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter that is so near and dear to the hearts of so many GW alumni and current students. I implore you to please approve the relief required to construct the new GW Hillel building, doing so will revitalize the GW campus and the Jewish community. This is a home and a family on the GW campus that has meant the world to so many people for so many years. It is a place that helped me through the most difficult period of my life, and shared in my most triumphant. I can think of no organization that needs or deserves this renovation more than my home away from home; GW Hillel.

Sincerely yours,

Dina Newman GWU '13

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dina Newman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "D".