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October 13, 2021

Chairman Fred Hill
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200-S
Washington, DC 20001
bzasubmissions@dc.gov

VIA EMAIL

Re: Application of the River School BZA Case No. 20472

Dear Chairman Hill and Members of the Board:

I have owned and resided at my home, 4120 Warren Street NW, for over 22 years. I purchased the home with my late husband who died in 2008. I now live in the house by myself. I intend for the property to remain in the family. The house, an historic landmarked property designed by famed architect Gustav Stickley and built over a century ago, as well as almost one acre of gardens and grounds, are very significant from an historic preservation and neighborhood history perspective.

My property shares approximately 195 feet of property line with the Buchanan Estate at 4220 Nebraska Avenue NW. Accordingly, I am the property owner who is most affected by this proposal. I was friends with Ruth Buchanan, the previous owner, and am friends with some of her surviving family. I am pleased that the proposed plan reuses the historic Buchanan house and does not change its character by demolition or a large addition.

The River School approached me early in the process (over one year ago) to make sure my concerns were addressed. Given the likely foreseeable alternatives for development of this large lot, and in view of the River School's good reputation and its many mitigation commitments, I support the school's planned use. My biggest concern was the potential use of the very narrow existing driveway circle (located very near my master bedroom) for a busy carpool line. The River School thankfully devised a plan to create a loop road with two access points to Nebraska Avenue that will not use the existing driveway circle for vehicular queuing. I was also concerned that a school next door might want to build all weather playing fields with lighting for night-time use – essentially turning the property into a 16-plus hour a day noisy gathering place for large crowds. The school has promised that it will not allow such activity. I was also concerned that the school might want to rent the large Buchanan home and property to outside groups and individuals for large events during weekends and weekday evenings.

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Again, the school has promised not to allow such uses. I was also concerned that the school might decide to significantly expand in enrollment thereby changing the relatively small to medium size school into a mega campus. The school has promised to limit its enrollment numbers to a reasonable level. I am also concerned about protecting the estate's heritage trees and the overall "park-like" atmosphere of the estate. The school has promised to protect heritage trees and much of the beautiful and sound-buffering landscaping and gardens. Given all of the above-referenced assurances (which I trust the BZA will make enforceable) my major concerns have been addressed.

While I share the concern of many neighbors about the noise, construction dust and traffic that inevitably will come from any significant redevelopment of this property, I believe that this proposal will be better to live next door to than any reasonably foreseeable alternative use that would give the Buchanan family the deserved reasonable return on their investment. Sadly, it is simply unrealistic to assume that the Buchanan Estate will remain in its current quiet and peaceful condition. Of the possible future uses, a school with an excellent reputation and with plans to preserve ample open space seems appropriate and preferable to a development with multiple houses or an unregulated charter school or government use.

Accordingly, I have no objection to this application.

Respectfully submitted by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. L. Nottingham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and a long, sweeping tail.

Elizabeth L. Nottingham