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June 14, 2022

Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
441 4th St NW, Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20001

SENT VIA E-MAIL

Re: SEIU 32BJ Comments to Text Amendment 22-01

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Zoning Commission:

SEIU 32BJ submits the following comments to the District of Columbia's text amendment case 22-01 that would permit matter-of-right residential use of non-residential buildings. While we support redevelopments of vacant office spaces, we believe that the redevelopment process should allow opportunities for the local community to provide input. Allowing conversions of non-residential buildings as a matter of right would remove an opportunity for residents to engage with the District and developer on any proposed conversions. As such, we currently do not support this text amendment.

SEIU 32BJ represents over 160,000 workers across the East Coast, including over 4,000 janitorial cleaners and 2,000 security officers who work in commercial office buildings in D.C. Our members in the D.C. commercial office sector are overwhelmingly immigrant, Black and Brown workers. Over the years, we have fought to raise standards, creating good paying jobs with high quality benefits at commercial office buildings across the city. D.C. has become a progressive leader on low-wage worker issues, enacting legislation for service workers at commercial office buildings such as the Displaced Worker Protection Act, Building Service Employees Minimum Work Week Act, and the Enhanced Professional Security Act.

We support the creation of a lively, vibrant downtown. With the rise of remote work and office vacancy rates at historic high levels, we recognize the need to reimagine our downtown spaces. We also support the creation of more affordable housing. However, lively and vibrant downtowns require more than just the creation of more housing units. A thriving downtown also requires the creation of good jobs, including good service jobs, to attract people to live, work and play in the area. Our members, many of whom are Black and Brown workers and longtime D.C. residents, have fought to achieve livable wages and quality benefits that make it possible for them to live in D.C. As the District looks to convert more office buildings to residential buildings, we believe thoughtful planning and community engagement are needed to ensure the process does not erode jobs standards that make living in D.C. unaffordable for our members. The request for zoning relief process is one way through which community members can provide input to ensure we are creating an equitable and thriving downtown D.C.

Thank you for considering our comments in your process. We look forward to working with the District on continuing to build a more equitable city for all.

Respectfully,

ZONING COMMISSION

District of Columbia

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CASE NO. 22-01
EXHIBIT NO. 10



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