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April 11, 2014

Victor Hoskins
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Beatriz Otero
Deputy Mayor for Human Services
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 223
Washington, DC 20004

Brian Hanlon
Director
DC Department of General Services
2000 18th Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20009

VIA E-MAIL: victor.hoskins@dc.gov
beatriz.otero@dc.gov
brian.hanlon@dc.gov

RE: Movable Playground next to Temporary Family Shelter at DC General

Dear Deputy Mayor Hoskins, Deputy Mayor Otero and Director Hanlon:

We write to express our support for a movable playground next to the temporary family shelter at DC General. Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6B voted 10-0 to send this letter during our properly noticed April 8, 2014, meeting with a quorum present.

Currently, more than 600 homeless children live with their families at the DC General Emergency Family Shelter, located on Reservation 13. While the deteriorating former hospital building includes a playroom on the lobby level with limited access, the existing DC General campus does not have an outdoor playground or safe space for children to play outside. Children living at the shelter must walk a nearly half a mile, crossing parking lots and the heavily trafficked 19th Street SE, to reach the closest existing playground to the shelter (Spielberg Park, 17th Street SE and Massachusetts Avenue SE). Therefore, this playground is rarely used by the children from the shelter and they are forced to play on the sidewalk and street.

The Homeless Children's Playtime Project, a nonprofit organization that provides playtime and recreation activities for children living at DC General, has been advocating for a playground at DC General. They have partnered with Pepco and other local businesses to provide full funding for a new playground. The Playtime Project has been

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ANC 6B Letter to Victor Hoskins, Beatriz Otero and Brian Hanlon

RE: The Homeless Children's Playtime Project's Playground at DC General

trying to work with your agencies to find an appropriate location accessible to the children. The organization's efforts have been complicated by the fact that construction for phase I of the Hill East Development is expected to begin in the next 12-18 months.

As you know, ANC 6B fully supports mixed-use development plans for Reservation 13, and we are eager to see phase I begin. Our commission also has urged the city to find alternative housing and close the temporary family shelter at DC General. We view housing so many incredibly needy families in such deplorable conditions, including a large number of families with children, as an outrage and embarrassment to our city and as completely counterproductive to the ultimate goal of ending homelessness. We also indicated a willingness to include permanent supportive housing or a smaller scale new shelter as part of the subsequent and final phase of the Hill East Development.

However, in the short term, we also understand that the children living at DC General need a safe, outdoor space to play each day. Jamila Larson, executive director of the Playtime Project, has told the commission and city that the fully-funded playground equipment would be movable. She has also indicated interest in working with your agencies to review the Reservation 13 master plan to find a location that could serve as a permanent home for the playground.

Given these parameters, we encourage you to work with the Homeless Children's Playtime Project to find such a location for the playground as soon as possible. The city should be able to continue its pursuit of the full vision of the Reservation 13 master plan while at the same time ensuring that the children currently living at the temporary shelter have access to a safe outdoor recreational area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Flahaven", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Flahaven
Chair

cc: The Honorable Vincent C. Gray, Mayor, District of Columbia
The Honorable Yvette Alexander, Councilmember, Ward 7
The Honorable Tommy Wells, Councilmember, Ward 6
The Honorable Jim Graham, Councilmember, Ward 1
David Berns, Director, DC Department of Human Services
Eboni Rose-Thompson, Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7F