

Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Md. 20850

Re: Holton Arms Expansion Proposal

Dear Hearing Examiner,

We are long time residents for the past 37 years of the Al-Marah community, and we have serious concerns about the proposed expansion by the Holton-Arms School. Our community, which is located just inside the 495 beltway off of River Road, is directly across from Holton-Arms and already deals with traffic from the nearby Primary Day School. The proposed plans would significantly worsen an already problematic situation for our neighborhood.

Our community relies on just two access points from River Road: Burdette Road and Royal Dominion Drive. Both of these entrances are directly in the path of Holton-Arms traffic, and the current volume already causes significant congestion. We are particularly concerned about the school's plan under CBA-1174-E, which would dramatically increase enrollment and allow for large-scale facility rentals. Even the school's own traffic consultant admitted these changes would result in hundreds of more cars coming through River Road causing worse congestion than before. A further concern is the significant "cut-through" traffic we experience as Holton-Arms families and staff use our neighborhood to avoid congestion on River Road. The school's proposed expansion offers no realistic solution to this problem. In fact, their primary suggestion to build a dedicated left-turn lane at the Royal Dominion Drive exit would only encourage more of this dangerous and disruptive behavior. This "solution" does nothing to address our concerns and would only allow the school to encourage more drivers to use Al-Marah as a bypass rather than use River Road. This plan would exacerbate safety hazards for our residents, including children and elderly walkers, and would limit our own access to our homes. Additionally, the school's planning information includes renting out facilities when school is not in session, further congesting a stretch of River Road that is already heavily impacted by traffic.

We are disappointed that the school has been unwilling to consider proven traffic mitigation strategies, such as mandatory busing and carpooling. Instead, their plan relies solely on education and monetary incentives, strategies that school representatives themselves have conceded might not be effective and would require a significant amount of time to implement. Other local private schools, like The McLean School, The Potomac School, and Georgetown Day School, have successfully implemented mandatory busing. Holton-Arms also has a second entrance on Burdette, but the school was unwilling to consider having traffic use this alternate path. They also

refused to discuss expanding the lanes within their main entrance to better manage traffic, preferring to burden our neighborhood instead. The school's lack of transparent communication with our community has also been deeply disappointing. During a recent Zoom meeting on September 9th, only a select number of our residents were invited, and no public notice was placed in our neighborhood, unlike the notices given to residents in nearby communities. It is clear that the school views our neighborhood as an extension of their entrance rather than a community.

From a neighborhood standpoint, increasing through traffic at our Royal Dominion Drive exit would make it far more difficult for residents to get to work or appointments. We would be blocked in by Holton-Arms cars trying to cross River Road, a problem that many of us have experienced for many years.

In conclusion, we urge you to oppose this expansion. We do NOT want Holton-Arms to expand, and we do NOT want a dedicated left-turn lane on Royal Dominion Drive. The school should be required to implement crucial safety measures, such as mandatory busing, and to fund license plate monitors and street signs to enforce a rule that no Holton-Arms cars can use Al-Marah as a cut-through. We hope you will make recommendations to help protect our safety and access to our homes.

Thank you for your attention,

Handwritten signatures of George and Vivian Zalzal. The signature on the left is 'George Zalzal' and the signature on the right is 'Vivian Zalzal'.

George and Vivian Zalzal