

The Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings  
100 Maryland Avenue, Room 200  
Rockville, MD 20850

10 November 2025

Phone: 240-777-6660 /FAX: 240-777-6665

Attn: Lynn Robeson Hannan (Case No. CBA-1174-E)

SUBJECT: PETITION OF THE HOLTON ARMS SCHOOL – SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am Colonel (R) Dr. Michael Xydakis and with this letter, I am writing to register my support for the proposed student enrollment expansion at The Holton Arms School (Holton) in Bethesda. While acknowledging that I am the parent of two teenage girls who currently attend Holton, I cannot abdicate my responsibility to provide appropriate context, proportionality, and perspective on this issue.

My family and I have resided in Al-Marah for almost 4 years. We moved to Al-Marah from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio in 2022. My wife and I alternate driving our children to and from Holton at least twice a day - every day - for both drop-off and pick-up. We also perform supplemental evening pick-ups from Holton based on sports and after school activities. Hence, I am a subject matter expert regarding the traffic situation between Holton and Al-Marah, particularly during rush hour.

It would be useful if the members of the zoning commission knew what the facts are.

These fact cannot be overstated:

1. I have neither observed nor experienced any problem with traffic congestion within the Al-Marah subdivision; even during morning and evening commutes.
2. There are NO significant safety concerns for pedestrians in Al-Marah.
3. The proposed potential increase in enrollment will have NO effect on traffic in Al-Marah.
4. Many residents, our family included, chose to live in Al-Marah due to the proximity to Holton.
5. The presence of Holton is a positive externality for property values in Al-Marah.
6. Al-Marah does NOT have a Homeowners Association (HOA)

I have provided The Zoning Board with video evidence from my automobile dashboard camera of what a typical drop-off and pick-up day looks like to and from Al-Marah to Holton. The

Xydakis Memo to OZAH

Exhibit 28 (d)  
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transit time ranges from < 2 minutes to 5 minutes and is entirely dependent on the color of the stop light when you approach the intersection of Royal Dominion Drive and River Road.

At its core, a self-appointed group of Al-Marah residents are claiming that excessive traffic is present in the neighborhood by vehicles transiting to and from Holton. By adjusting the truth and conflating Al-Marah traffic with the overall traffic situation on River Road (for which Holton is only a minor contributor), they have then gone on to create a false narrative of excessive traffic congestion and safety concerns in the neighborhood. I have witnessed no such thing and cannot substantiate these claims.

Over the past 3-4 months, I have spoken to a multitude of residents and neighbors. Of note, a large portion of the residents who reside in Al-Marah, if not the majority, are retirees and senior citizens. In general, people in this demographic group who are retired would not be the ones impacted by rush hour traffic in Al-Marah. Yet, it is this demographic who are spearheading this campaign. In my opinion, this group is both politically and culturally unitary and is unsuited for skeptical self-policing of the neighborhood, rendering the safeguard of neighborhood petitions nearly meaningless.

I have heard statements from neighbors such as:

“How does this benefit me for Holton to expand”  
 “We already have enough traffic in Washington, D.C.”  
 “Let’s just leave well enough alone”  
 “It takes me 15 minutes just to get out of my driveway”  
 “I don’t want to get involved” (Most common response)

These types of comments fall somewhere between stunning and irresponsible. We are a community... Holton is part of our community... we are citizens... we need to look beyond our own self-interests.

In addition, this self-appointed group appears to have little sense or concerns for the larger dimensions of the current competitive state of the education industry. Their actions betray a deep misunderstanding about how schools like Holton and societal change need to work. A school like Holton operates in a very competitive landscape and is in competition for top students and faculty with other preparatory schools in the National Capital Region. Holton must be given the

latitude and head space to evolve with the times. An academically excellent school like Holton is not something that, once established, maintains itself. It is instead a trust that every Head of School and Board of Directors is called upon to preserve. The status and reputation of the school can be lost as readily through neglect as direct attack.

In conclusion, I believe that justice in this case will prevail. However, as I have wrestled with this issue, I also believe generational politics, a demographic imbalance amongst the residents in Al-Marah and a web of mutual "friends" amongst the long-term residents, has infected this process could potentially lead to a miscarriage of justice - which could have significant long-term negative effects for Holton.

I feel certain that The Zoning Board is committed to providing the most basic of expectations: fairness and integrity. I remain hopeful that all parties can come up with a collaborative solution that allows for an efficient and fair resolution.

Again, I state categorically for the record: There are NO traffic congestion issues within Al-Marah. The Holton Arms School is a force for good in this community and indeed this country. Their mission is a noble one: to educate young women to become leaders within our society at the national level. This country needs more Holton-Arms schools!

Most people are good citizens who want to do the right thing. Sometimes we need to be reminded of that!

Very Respectfully,



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Cc: Soo Lee-Cho, Esq. Applicant's Attorney

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