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3-16-24

Support Statement for Linder Academy SUP #2023-00105
Alexandria City Council Public Hearing - Docket Item #14 (3/16/24)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Jennifer Mehler-Rardin. I am the parent of a current middle school student at the Linder Academy. I am strongly in favor of Linder's proposed upper school location at 112 North Washington Street.

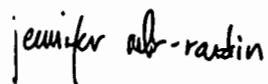
For the past three years, the Linder Academy has been my daughter's educational unicorn. My family has experienced first-hand how difficult it is to find an appropriate school setting in the DC region for a child with a unique learning profile like hers. After years of extensive searching and exhausting our options at other programs near and far, both public and private, we found Linder. The school's evidenced based instructional model and emphasis on project-based learning sets it apart. The school has given our child opportunities to grow and learn in ways that are unmatched by any other school environment.

In addition to the daily classroom instruction, Linder is modeling what it means to be integrated into the life of the surrounding community. As a Linder student, my child has volunteered at a nearby senior living residence. She has sourced a materials list and developed a budget for a class project through in-person inquiries with local merchants in Old Town. She has observed the ecosystem of the Potomac River for her science journal. She has played in the city's public parks. She has even navigated the local bus system for a recent field trip to DC. Each of these activities has been part of a typical day at school for her and all are within a short walk from Linder's South Washington Street campus. Old Town Alexandria is not just where her school is on the map, it is an extension of her hometown neighborhood.

As previous City residents, and after decades of working in and around Alexandria, my husband and I appreciate how important traffic patterns are for all who live and spend time in the City. We experience Linder's pickup and drop off procedure on a daily basis at the current location. The school staff are posted out front to guide us and they have explained the traffic pattern clearly and consistently to the school families. The process is efficient and respectful towards the neighbors. This precedent will carry forward to the new location because the school staff and families are intrinsically motivated to support a safe and pedestrian friendly setting for the students that fits in with the neighborhood.

My family is delighted to be part of the extended community of Old Town Alexandria through our connection to the Linder Academy. I encourage you to support approval for the proposed upper school location, so that our daughter and her peers may continue their education as your neighbors while participating in the vibrant life of the City.

Respectfully,



Jennifer Mehler-Rardin
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