September 12, 2019

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Mayor  
District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Phil Mendelson  
Chairman  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. Suite 504  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser and Chairman Mendelson:

On behalf of ANC3B, I would like to share some concerns we have regarding the city’s recent decision to extend to the Maret School priority access to the Jelleff Recreation Center’s primary playing field.

For many decades, through the Boys and Girls Clubs and the District Department of Parks and Recreation, the Jelleff Recreation Center has been an important part of the community that ANC3B serves. Jelleff is located just a few blocks south of our Commission area and is also across the street from Hardy Middle School, which serves many students from our five Single Member Districts. As you are aware, Hardy has only limited space suitable for outdoor play and sports on its campus and it is significantly smaller than regulation size for most sports. The Jelleff playing field is the closest outdoor field that can be used by Hardy, participants in Jelleff’s own programs, and other recreational leagues that serve our community.

We understand that the Maret School has made a significant investment in the playing field on the Jelleff grounds after the city acquired the facility from the Boys & Girls Clubs. And we are also aware that Maret officials have stated that they plan to make additional investments in Jelleff’s field with the expectation that the school’s teams will continue to have priority access to those facilities.
However, as a public recreation center, Jelleff’s facilities should be available to all members of the community, including students from Hardy Middle School and the city’s own youth programs at Jelleff. There should, after all, be equity in access to the District’s public facilities. As the city is already planning to make a $7 million investment in renovating the Jelleff Recreation Center, it is not clear why city officials need to continue to provide Maret with preferred access in exchange for funding additional renovations to the facility’s playing field. The city should not prioritize access to a public facility for a single private school, particularly when so many members of the community are pleading for greater public access to Jelleff field.

We urge the Mayor and the Department of Parks and Recreation to reconsider their new agreement with the Maret School. Instead, we would like to see a new accord that provides significantly broader public access to Jelleff field while recognizing the investments Maret has made to date and fulfilling any remaining obligations the city may have to the school, if any. We also urge the Council to take every appropriate step to ensure that the executive reconsiders its 10-year extension of the arrangement with the Maret School.

This Commission is committed to supporting the effort to change the agreement with Maret and significantly expand public access to this invaluable public facility.

Sincerely,

Brian Turmail
Chairman

This letter was approved by a vote of 4-0 at a duly noticed public meeting of the Commission on September 12, 2019, at which a quorum was present. (Three of the five members constitute a quorum.) With this vote, the Commission also designated the Chairman or his designee to represent ANC3B on this matter.