December 8, 2016

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
The Honorable Anita Bonds, Chairman, Committee on Housing and Development
and other members of the Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Councilmembers:

ANC3B has been participating in the discussions with the Committee on Housing and Development about the ANC Omnibus Bill B21-0697 since the first roundtables with Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) members at the beginning of the year. We are now very concerned that the bill has evolved into a proposal that no longer serves the goals and objectives that the Committee as well as our Commission and other ANCs had sought and supported, and we urge you not to approve it on final vote on December 20. The changes made in the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute on November 15 removed the provisions of most significance to ANCs, and the amendments offered on December 6 do little to change our assessment that the bill does not assist ANCs to perform their most functions and, if anything, would further complicate and even weaken our ability to carry out our responsibilities for constituents.

The original bill aimed to clarify and strengthen the provisions on notice requirements and “great weight,” which are the two most important levers for ANCs to be able to represent the interests of residents in providing advice on specific District proposals and actions, which is the fundamental responsibility of an ANC. Yet the current bill does nothing to strengthen the provisions covering notice and “great weight.” Recent amendments may, in fact, remove some important language on the notice that District agencies and officials must provide to ANCs, while adding further administrative mandates that ANCs themselves must meet. In our view, adopting this legislation represents no significant benefit for the ANCs or the city and our system of governance, but it may create significant public harm.

In addition, ANCs do not yet have a full published copy of the language that is proposed for approval on December 20. There has been almost no time or opportunity to review any of the changes made in the legislation since the public hearings were held in early fall. Most ANCs will not have a chance to assess the effects of the amendments made in November or those proposed in the past few days or offer comments on them. We believe the revised language merits closer scrutiny as well as opportunities for comment.

As a Commission, we have considered this matter at our duly noticed meeting today, December 8, 2016, at which a quorum was present, and we have voted to send this letter, recommending strongly that the bill be removed from the agenda for the Council’s legislative session on December 20 or that it be rejected by vote of the Council.
For the interests of the public and the effective operation of the ANC s across the city, which are very important to our representative system of government in the District, we encourage the Council to defer legislation on ANC s until the next session. The Council members will then be able to consider the issues and specific provisions with greater care and hold public hearings with adequate notice, so ANC s and others have time to evaluate the proposals, discuss them in our public meetings, understand the full effect of the changes being proposed, and provide informed official ANC recommendations to you.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jackie Blumenthal
Chairman, ANC 3B

cc.
The Honorable David Grosso (At Large)
The Honorable Elissa Silverman (At Large)
The Honorable Robert White, Jr. (At Large)
The Honorable Brianne Nadeau (Ward 1)
The Honorable Jack Evans (Ward 2)
The Honorable Mary M. Cheh (Ward 3)
The Honorable Brandon T. Todd (Ward 4)
The Honorable Kenyan McDuffie (Ward 5)
The Honorable Charles Allen (Ward 6)
The Honorable Yvette M. Alexander (Ward 7)
The Honorable LaRuby May (Ward 8)
Mr. Gottlieb Simon, OANC