

March 3, 2018

Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
Suite 410
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Bill 22-579, Helicopter Landing Pad Amendment Act of 2017

Dear Committee Members,

As a 35-year owner, and retired Professor of Economics, living in my house at 2403 I Street NW (just across the street from GWU Hospital) I am **firmly opposed** to any proposal to construct a helicopter landing pad on the roof of this hospital, right next to the crowded Foggy Bottom Metro stop. The expected social costs of this proposal far outweigh its presumed social benefits in this extremely dense urban area. Thousands of people live in buildings near the proposed GWU helipad, and tens of thousands of commuters pass in the streets below it. So *responsible public officials must consider two expected social costs of this proposed helipad.*

—First, helicopter traffic will repeatedly disturb the sleep of many hundreds of people each night and thereby raise their blood pressure, damage their health and shorten their expected lifespan.

—Second, just one helicopter accident could kill scores of people in a flash. These accidents are rare, but they do happen and their social costs are enormous. Thus the expected social costs of a GWU helipad are high. This is why helicopter landing pads do not exist in crowded urban areas. (Landing pads also depress both adjacent property values and the resulting property taxes paid to the city.)

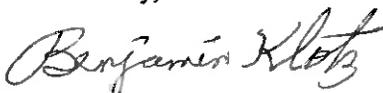
So why should GWU hospital have a helipad above the Metro stop? Are there any net social benefits at all? The hospital itself is the only obvious private beneficiary of a helipad—it will give them bragging rights in the hospital world and may raise their profits—but there may be NO NET PUBLIC BENEFITS (no net saving of lives) from this helipad! Why? Because:

— First, there are *already nearby hospital helipads*, such as at Georgetown Hospital.

—Second, even if Foggy Bottom is closer to an accident scene than are other helipads any helicopter carrying victims may get to other helipads faster because its *approach path to Foggy Bottom will be severely constrained by no-fly zones* near the White House and other sensitive sites around crowded Foggy Bottom. (What WILL the Secret Service say?)

Finally, *what is the chance that GWU will follow stringent city rules for operating its dangerous proposed helipad?* For years, I have seen GWU daily violate city rules for managing its hospital loading dock on 24th Street. *Daily loading-dock violations include dock doors open illegally all day long and over-scheduling of delivery trucks, which forces them to park illegally on neighborhood residential streets, with motors running illegally as early as 5 a.m. Clearly, this dock has seriously harmed its neighbors. (The architect of the dock admitted to me in a public meeting years ago that he was unaware the dock faced a residential neighborhood!)* GWU will further harm them if you allow it to build this dangerous helipad.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Klotz
Retired Professor of Economics

2 copies included