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Yes Duffy, Chairperson
Zoning Adjustments Board
BUSD Board Room
1231 Addison Street
Berkeley, CA 94702
Via email: zab@berkeleyca.gov

Re: 2573 Shattuck, Letter in support of granting use permit for this Berkeley-based family owned veterinary hospital.

Dear Chair Duffy and Zoning Adjustments Board Members:

I am writing to request that you vote to GRANT Dr. Leah Issacson and Thomas Mintern's application to open a new veterinary hospital in downtown Berkeley. What is special and exciting is that it is a family owned animal hospital owned and operated by a husband and wife veterinary team who have raised their children and live right here in Berkeley.

Notwithstanding the letterhead, this is a personal recommendation of Leah Issacson and Thomas Mintern. I have had animals all of my adult life. I know first-hand how important it is to have a veterinarian who cares for both you and your furry family member, a veterinarian who appreciates firsthand the deep, inexplicable devotion you have for your pet.

Our black Labrador, Sophia Loren Dahlbacka, a dog of a lifetime, contracted mast cell cancer at the age of seven. We did everything we could to save her. Then at 10, the cancer re-occurred. Dr. Issacson successfully removed the tumor. At 13, the cancer returned, and we returned to Dr. Issacson. Two hours later, Leah Issacson called me to say there were too many tumors to operate. Surgery was no longer an option. As I ran, tears running down my cheeks, to go pick her up, she tried to comfort me. That night we sat, miserable, by the fire with our totally doped up (for the surgery she never had) dog. The next day Leah called us, "I think I have something", she said.

Sophie lived three weeks past her 16th birthday. Up until one month before, she was a happy, loving dog, with a huge appetite who walked 1-2 miles a day, each day a

bit more slowly than the last. Since she lived in the moment, she accepted each diminution in skill with equanimity. She was the she-ro, “the valiant dog” to everyone on our home trail. Her tail, always wagging, always jumping up to greet us at the door, following us everywhere we went. At 15, Dr. Mintern had to employ some very skillful, very gross maneuver to extract some rocks she decided to eat. Only he, of all the doctors at that corporate office, ventured to do that to save her life.

I am telling you this because, I do not know of any doctor or hospital that would have cared enough to call us any hour, to comfort us, wipe our tears as they brought Sophie back from every set-back, assuring at each time, her maximum quality of life, than this incomparable couple.

I know from a very recent experience that corporate hospitals don’t do that. Cassie, our 14-year-old rescue, like Sophie committed “dietary indiscretions” regularly. This last one was so serious she needed immediate emergency care. We had to go to a corporate emergency hospital because Leah’s permit was still not through the Berkeley Planning process. At 1:30 AM, the veterinarian, who I had met just that night, called to tell me, for her quality of life, we should let Cassie go. I drove straight out there and for two hours, while I scratched Cassie’s ears, she and her tech were of one mind: “let her go.” , That doctor didn’t know me, or Cassie. We asked to wait until morning rounds to make a decision. The doctor called at 7:00 AM to say Cassie had stood up to walk! She is home, healthy, back on the trail, but with a muzzle to avoid any future dietary “indiscretions”.

Dr. Issacson and Dr. Mintern, because they take the time to know us, and our pet would not have put us through this gut-wrenching decision. Please vote to GRANT them their Use Permit. For those of us who love our pets, perhaps more than we should, need this hospital in Berkeley.

Very truly yours,

