Testimony to the National Capital Planning Commission

Project: New Monumental Arch (File number 8778)

Hearing: November 5, 2026

Rev. Alexa Fraser, Rockville, Maryland

My name is Rev. Alexa Fraser, from Rockville, Maryland.

I grew up in DC and was taken to then National airport as a family outing. I recall it before the main building was enlarged and before there was a second terminal. I have roots here and love my city and its heritage. I want it to be responsible and, above all, safe: safe for the passengers and crews who fly in and out every day, for the families who live and play near the runway, and for the many legislators who use this airport regularly.

As an adult I've enjoyed time near the airport at Gravelly Point Park, at the end of the runway, where my son loved to go for the full airplane landing experience. I've seen how quickly the planes come in and know there is no room for error in those landings.

I've also flown in and out of that airport for close to 70 years. I've flown in rain, snow, ice and windy conditions. I know that descent is already challenging and aviation safety experts have spoken:

• Tom Lintner, 30 years in aviation safety at the Federal Aviation Administration and before that an air traffic controller at LaGuardia, says that in this airspace "there aren't enough seconds left to make the right decision," and that added complexity is "the last thing this area needs."

• Jeff Guzzetti, retired accident investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration, says the arch would sit a few hundred yards to the right of the approach path to the airport's main runway: "The best, and the most basic option, is simply not to build it." And: "This is just adding another hazard."

• Shawn Pruchnicki, former airline pilot and accident investigator who teaches aviation safety at The Ohio State University, calls the arch "inherently dangerous," and says a plane flying low in strong easterly winds "could easily get blown into" it.

• Emily Hanoka, an air traffic controller in the Reagan National tower, told 60 Minutes that currently, before the arch is in place, about half the experienced controllers who come there to train look at the operation and withdraw: "Absolutely not."

And of course we have the helicopters. Here I don’t have an expert’s words, but the reality of a January 2025 midair collision. Helicopters here can fly as low as 200 feet, below the arch's 250 feet. That midair collision over the Potomac killed 67 people. That could have been me or you.

And I understand that you are not voting on the full plan. The President has said this arch will be a military complex with snipers and drones. The plans before you leave that out, but the White House says details of a national security component may yet be released at a later date, and the Interior Department says the design can accommodate it. I don't see how you can vote on a plan that is not final.

This project is dangerous. It is neither safe nor responsible, and it should not move forward.