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October 21, 2013

Burlington City Council
City Hall
149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401

Re: St. Joseph's School

Dear City Council:

I am writing to oppose the sale of St. Joseph's School to the Burlington School District. I am a proud supporter of our public schools. At the same time, meeting the needs of our public schools should never come at the expense of other essential community services, especially those providing direct service to families.

Currently, St. Joseph's School is used by the VNA Family Room, Robin's Nest Preschool and the AALV. I speak as a parent who is supported by the VNA Family Room. The Family Room provides a place where families with young children can drop in for open play time, learn about child development, learn stress reduction skills, enjoy a healthy meal and also take classes to learn English or practice parenting skills, as well as receive assistance with accessing food, health care and housing.

The Family Room space has been tailored to the needs of children and families. There is a large kitchen and an open bathroom. There are two play rooms. The larger one includes a built-in climbing structure and sand box. The area is large enough to accommodate many families with active children and is entirely accessible. The building is also centrally located to some of Burlington's most vulnerable populations and is on the bus line. It will be impossible for the Family Room to find a comparable space in terms of area, location and customized modifications.

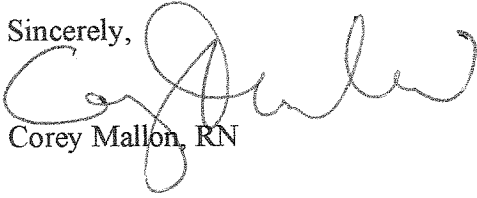
Further, the VNA Family Room and the AALV work closely together to provide a variety of services. By being housed in the same building, resources are shared and the VNA Family Room has developed growing cultural competency in working with New American families. There is hope that the building, if not taken by the Burlington School District, could be converted into a community center.

As both the Burlington School District and the City of Burlington host discussions to talk about racial justice, it is important that their actions actually support racial justice. Forcing the AALV and Family Room to relocate through the sale of St. Joseph's fractures services to all families, but also disproportionately interrupts the services provided both by and to New American families and families of color.

The sale of St. Joseph's School to the Burlington School District likely means the relocation of the collaborative non-profits housed there now. It makes it impossible for the building to have a future as a community center. The services currently provided at St. Joseph's school enhance the ability of families to support our community's children. Our public schools provide our community's children

the education they need to thrive in a challenging world. Public schools and family-centered services should not compete for the very same resources, even the very same building. The Burlington School District must renew its commitment to all of Burlington's children and find an alternative to the purchase of St. Joseph's School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Corey Mallon".

Corey Mallon, RN