



Alpha Epsilon Pi

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP
for the JEWISH COMMUNITY

4/25/2024

CHAIRWOMEN VIRGINIA FOX
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

Cc:

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Dear Representative Fox,

We write today representing Alpha Epsilon Pi, a 111-year-old Jewish College Fraternity with over 6,500 undergraduate members and over 110,000 living alumni. Alpha Epsilon Pi currently operates collegiate chapters on more than 140 college campuses in the United States as well as several in Canada and Israel. Suffice it to say we are deeply invested in our systems of higher education and its institutions. Alpha Epsilon Pi is also an apolitical and non-partisan organization. We are proud to be an open tent and a forum for all members and encourage our members to advocate for their beliefs by engaging in civil civic discourse.

Based on the content of the letter that you authored on April 21, 2024 to Dr. Shafik, Mr. Greenwald, and Ms. Shipman of Columbia University you, and the members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, seem to have clarity on the growing number of campuses that have failed to provide safe and equal access to Jewish students. Title VI violations are pervasive on many campuses, and little has been done about them. Today this inaction has finally manifested in violence. We are deeply concerned about the way your letter ends. After pages of citations referencing the many instances and ways in which Columbia University violated or failed to uphold the law, it concludes with nothing but a stern warning that "the Committee will not hesitate in holding you accountable." We want to point out that, despite your language, the Committee and Department of Education (DOE) have already hesitated and continue to hesitate in holding Columbia and other institutions accountable.

There are no objective benchmarks included in your letter that force compliance and there is no substantiative action being taken by the government to defund institutions that violate Title VI or sending the national guard in to enforce the law as it has done in the past. If the pages of cited issues which your letter outlined is not enough, what does it take for the DOE to act and withhold all funding from Columbia due to its violation of law?



Does a Jewish student have to be killed on a college campus before you act?

Yesterday morning, We woke up to the news that once again, Columbia is failing to act and has given unlawful protesters a 48-hour extension for “compliance.” The president of Columbia cited free speech concerns as the reason for extension, but it is clear that what we are seeing is not about free speech. Universities, including Columbia, have not hesitated in many other instances to stifle or control speech on campus as they are allowed to do by law especially when it causes substantial disruption¹.

In 1790 George Washington wrote a letter to the Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island, offering a prayer which today goes unanswered.

“May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and Figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths.”

Jewish students are fleeing from Columbia University and other academic institutions that our community has supported for generations. Please consider the words of the founders of our country and stop hesitating. Acting now would send an unequivocal message that all people have the right to pursue an education in universities across this land. Please send this message by immediately suspending all federal financial assistance to Columbia University pending the outcome of a formal title VI investigation and, if necessary, send the National Guard to restore order and protect Jewish students and faculty.

Robert Derdiger

Chief Executive Officer
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity

Scott Knapp

Supreme Master (International President)
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity

¹ Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (393 U.S. 503, 89 S. Ct. 733, 21 L. Ed. 2d 731, 1969 U.S.)