

Written Testimony of Mathew S. Nosanchuk

Hearing: "Antisemitism in Higher Education: Examining the Role of Faculty, Funding, and Ideology" 2175 Rayburn Office Building Tuesday, July 15, 2025

Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Wahlberg, and Ranking Member Scott, for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Matt Nosanchuk. I am a civil rights lawyer and Jewish community leader with experience as a senior policy professional in government and non-profit leader and consultant in the Jewish, legal, and civil rights communities.

Throughout my career, galvanizing action against antisemitism has been a central focus. I served in the Obama White House as liaison to the American Jewish community just as antisemitic incidents such as the 2015 *Hypercacher* Kosher supermarket attack in Paris were on the rise in Western Europe. In the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, I oversaw implementation of the new federal hate crimes law, which prohibits bias-motivated violence, including antisemitic violence. I co-founded and led the New York Jewish Agenda to build coalitions against antisemitism, and I served on the Nexus Project's Task Force to develop evidence-based policy responses to contemporary antisemitism.

Most relevant to today's hearing, as the former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Strategic Operations and Outreach in the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education,¹ I had a first-hand view of the deeply troubling spike in antisemitism on college campuses, particularly after October 7, 2023, and helped to mount the unprecedented effort to investigate and respond. During the previous administration, OCR opened for investigation and resolved more antisemitism cases than ever in its history, securing resolution agreements from more than five times as many universities and school districts than OCR secured during the first Trump administration.²

¹ Throughout this statement, "OCR" refers to the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education. When I refer to the OCR at another agency, I specifically identify that agency, e.g., the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

² The unprecedented enforcement activities of OCR in antisemitism and other Title VI shared ancestry investigations are described in Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dep't of Educ., PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS: HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS 2021-2025, at 14 (Jan. 2025), <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/protecting-civil-rights-109409.pdf>.

In our polarized nation, discourse and disagreement are too often laced with bigotry, hate, and discrimination. We are here today to discuss a strain of that hate, antisemitism, that has shape-shifted through society for 2,000 years. In America today, we have seen antisemitism reemerge across society, including at our nation's universities.

I would like to emphasize three key messages: First, antisemitism in America and on campuses is real, and responding to it seriously demands actions that are tailored to the unique context of universities, properly implemented, and adequately resourced. Second, the current administration's approach, including the broad, anti-democratic crackdown on foreign students, cutting funds for universities without regard for the well-established Title VI process, and gutting the very office mandated to enforce Title VI while claiming to champion the fight against antisemitism is not only contradictory but counterproductive. Third, Congress must look beyond political expediency and fulfill its core responsibility to provide meaningful oversight and adequate resources for effective solutions, rather than indulging in political theater that inflames an already volatile campus climate and ultimately harms the students it claims to protect.

Overview of the Landscape

At the outset, we must acknowledge that the antisemitism we are seeing today is not a new phenomenon that began after the October 7 Hamas attack and the Israel-Gaza war. Antisemitism has been on the rise on campuses and in our communities for the past eight years, part of an overall increase in bigotry and hate in our nation.

- In 2017, when white nationalists marched in Charlottesville chanting “Jews will not replace us,” President Trump's response, claiming there were “very fine people on both sides,” contributed to the normalization of extremist rhetoric in mainstream discourse.
- This normalization had deadly consequences. In 2018, eleven people were murdered at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh—the deadliest antisemitic attack in American history. The shooter was motivated by the “great replacement” conspiracy theory gaining traction in far-right circles and given voice in Charlottesville.
- Beginning in November 2019, Syracuse University experienced a wave of antisemitic and racist incidents with over 30 individual incidents reported over a several month period, including a threatening antisemitic email sent to a professor that contained an antisemitic slur and a message to “get in the oven where you belong”, swastikas drawn into the snow and scrawled on the walls of university buildings, and a number of racist incidents targeting Black, Asian American and Native American students. The impact of these incidents on the

campus community became so severe that many faculty members canceled classes, and university officials announced that students who chose to leave early for the Thanksgiving break would not be penalized.³

To effectively address antisemitism at universities, we must first understand the ways in which it manifests. Some of the most valuable insights come from university-convened antisemitism task forces, listening sessions, and climate surveys. Many of these were mandated in settlement agreements with OCR, which gathered important first-hand accounts and experiences of students, and documented both the severity of the problem and the diversity of Jewish student experiences across our nation's 4,000 colleges and universities. Regrettably, the majority of OCR staff who worked on these antisemitism agreements were forced out when the current administration slashed OCR's resources and staff.

These task forces have not shied away from recognizing up front that antisemitism on some campuses is widespread and pernicious, and that it harms the learning experience of many Jewish students. The reports also offer a glimpse into other parts of the Jewish student body that may be less impacted or impacted in different ways. They merit our careful attention, and I've added links to several in Appendix II to my statement.

It's important to note that across the thousands of colleges and universities in America, Jewish experiences vary widely. At some universities, Jewish students thrive in welcoming environments where the influence of rising white nationalist, neo-Nazi extremism is not felt, and the Israel-Gaza conflict hasn't dominated campus discourse. This in no way minimizes the serious problems where they exist, but it is essential to understand and acknowledge the full spectrum of experiences so we can develop targeted, effective solutions.

Key Trends

This statute that provides the basis for this committee's jurisdiction for today's hearing, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as interpreted through successive Democratic and Republican administrations since 2004, prohibits antisemitic harassment based on actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.⁴ The law creates clear

³ See, e.g., Valerie Strauss, *More Racist Graffiti Is Reported at Syracuse University*, WASH. POST (Nov. 21, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/11/21/more-racist-graffiti-is-reported-syracuse-university/> and Daily Orange News Staff, *Timeline: Hate Crimes, Incidents at or Near Syracuse University*, DAILY ORANGE (Nov. 16, 2019), <https://dailyorange.com/2019/11/timeline-racist-bias-related-incidents-near-syracuse-university/>.

⁴ See, e.g., U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, *Dear Colleague Letter: Protecting Students from Discrimination Based on Race, Color, or National Origin, Including Shared Ancestry or Ethnic*

obligations for federally funded institutions to eliminate hostile environments, investigate complaints thoroughly, and prevent the recurrence of discrimination.

On campuses where incidents have spiked, student testimonies, campus antisemitism task forces, climate surveys, and other research show that Jewish students face discrimination ranging from social ostracism, verbal harassment and, more rarely, physical violence. Jewish students have been taunted or even physically harassed or blocked from entering buildings or spaces while displaying Jewish symbols. Vandalism and graffiti, swastikas on dorm room doors, and *mezuzahs*—sacred markers on doorways of Jewish homes—have been torn from door frames.

These incidents are indicative of a trend affecting a wide swath of students. Too many students report that they conceal their Jewish identity or have retreated from parts of campus life to avoid being targeted for being Jewish. Even students who are active critics of Israeli policy report feeling marginalized in the current climate.

A frequent complaint centers on the existence of antisemitism and harassment on campus based social media apps like Yik Yak and Side Chat. The impact is particularly chilling because users may post anonymously but they are within the university community, so the content or threat could be coming from a student's dorm mate or classmate. The content frequently crosses over into brazen bigotry and threats—there are too many examples to count. One student received messages that he should be "waterboarded with gasoline and lit on fire."⁵ While many campuses are not experiencing these trends, where antisemitic incidents have surged, antisemitism pervades many aspects of campus life, and the sense of fear and intimidation fundamentally undermines the ability of Jewish students to participate fully in it.

Antisemitic Discrimination and Harassment in the Classroom

Reports of antisemitism and harassment inside the classroom that are either advanced or tolerated by faculty are particularly concerning. Most of us who reflect on our college experience remember one professor or class that left a strong impression. Faculty have the most immediate and direct impact on how students feel at college. The freedom for faculty to speak, teach, promote ideas, and incubate knowledge is foundational to the very concept of the university. This creates unique challenges when it comes to devising a system of consequences and accountability for faculty. Introducing divergent perspectives and even uncomfortable ideas is at the core of what makes a quality

Characteristics (May 7, 2024), <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-202405-shared-ancestry.pdf>.

⁵ Stanford University Subcommittee on Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias, "IT'S IN THE AIR": ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ISRAELI BIAS AT STANFORD, AND HOW TO ADDRESS IT 42 (May 31, 2024), https://news.stanford.edu/data/assets/pdf_file/0033/156588/ASAIB-final-report.pdf.

education. But in far too many instances, students report that faculty have gone beyond introducing uncomfortable ideas and have instead used the classroom to prosecute the case against Israel and those who may support the right of Israel to exist, shutting down students wishing to express alternate views.

These aren't merely cases of classroom bias. Professors have used instructional time to inappropriately promote advocacy or boycotts while others have created or permitted explicitly hostile environments for Jewish students. When students report such incidents, they sometimes are dismissed as having misinterpreted the professor or of being too sensitive. Rather than dealing directly with the faculty conduct, universities direct students to counseling services.

Instead of putting the burden on students, universities need to take the initiative to ensure that faculty bear the responsibility, and have the skills, to model how to productively engage across differing views. As a Stanford undergraduate, I experienced the power of that kind of model. I wrote my history honors thesis on Israel's early foreign policy. One of my thesis readers was a professor known for his harsh criticism of Israel—views very different from my own. Yet our substantive disagreements never crossed into antisemitism, and he evaluated my work fairly despite our divergent politics on Israel. That's how academic freedom should work.

Compare this to what happened at Stanford just days after October 7 when a lecturer in a freshman course known as "College 101" told Jewish students to take their belongings and stand in a corner, saying "This is what Israel does to the Palestinians."⁶ He then asked about Holocaust deaths and responded that "Colonizers killed more than 6 million. Israel is a colonizer."⁷ The instructor categorized students as "colonizers" or "colonized" based on their ancestry, calling an Israeli student "definitely a colonizer."⁸ Stanford concluded that "academic freedom does not permit the identity-based targeting of students" and removed the lecturer from teaching.⁹

Another egregious example of instructor malfeasance came to light when an investigation by OCR identified concerns that the University of Vermont failed to properly investigate alleged antisemitic incidents involving a teaching assistant who posted on social media about discriminating against Jewish students. The instructor said online that she was withholding course credits from Jewish students, subtracting points from Jewish students, celebrated the theft of an Israeli flag from a Jewish student's residence, and wrote the word "*Kristallnacht*" (a reference to a notorious

⁶ ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ISRAELI BIAS AT STANFORD, *supra* note 5, at 15-16.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

incident in 1938 when German Nazis brutally attacked the Jewish community) above a photo of a damaged storefront with Hebrew writing on it.¹⁰

The teaching assistant boasted in online posts that it was "good and funny... to not give Zionists credit for participation," and said she would deduct points from Jewish students for "going on birthright [trips to Israel]" and because "I hate ur vibe in general."¹¹ She also celebrated "bullying Zionists" online in multiple posts and said whoever stole the Israeli flag was "cool and special."¹² OCR's investigation found evidence that the university failed to meet its obligation to promptly and adequately investigate student reports of the instructor's antisemitic conduct, including the discriminatory conduct that occurred outside the classroom through social media posts that threatened academic consequences for students based on their Jewish identity.

OCR reached a settlement agreement with the University of Vermont in the spring of 2023, during the Biden administration, which mandated that the university provide antidiscrimination training to all staff and students with a focus on harassment based on national origin and shared ancestry. It also agreed to clarify the responsibilities of its equal opportunity office and Bias Response Team, publicly commit to addressing antisemitism and other forms of shared ancestry discrimination on campus, review climate surveys, and submit all complaints of antisemitism filed during the preceding academic year to OCR.¹³

These cases demonstrate that academic freedom does not protect faculty conduct that targets students based on their ethnic identity, creates hostile educational environments, or uses students' backgrounds to shame or segregate them. The line is crossed when pedagogical choices become identity-based targeting that interferes with students' equal access to education.

In an incident at the University of Florida Levin College of Law that occurred in the fall of 2024 and did not appear to be widely reported until the *New York Times* published a story about on it in June 2025,¹⁴ a law student, Preston Damsky—who acknowledged that it would not be wrong to refer to him as a Nazi—received an award for an

¹⁰ Letter from Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dep't of Educ., to Suresh Garimella, President, Univ. of Vt. (Apr. 3, 2023), <https://ocrcas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/01222002-a.pdf>. The resolution agreement is at <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/more/01222002-b.pdf>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Richard Fausset, *A White Nationalist Wrote a Law School Paper Promoting Racist Views. It Won Him an Award*, N.Y. TIMES, (June 21, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/21/us/white-supremacist-university-of-florida-paper.html>.

unabashedly white nationalist paper from his professor, a federal district court judge.¹⁵ After the professor awarded the paper first prize, the interim dean of the law school defended the decision. This response to an avowedly racist paper placed the imprimatur of a distinguished faculty member and the University of Florida on a student's hateful ideology. After the university provided both academic validation and a public platform for the student's views, the student took to X, where he tweeted that Jews should be abolished "by any means necessary."¹⁶

This incident illustrates how faculty can give a platform to antisemitism through the power of their position. When professors—particularly those with prestigious credentials like a federal judgeship—legitimize white nationalist content through academic awards, they signal to the entire campus community that such views fall within acceptable academic discourse. The harm extends far beyond the immediate act. The University of Florida, [according to](#) Hillel International,¹⁷ has the largest Jewish student population of any university in the country, and university officials reported that the white nationalist and antisemitic posts made many students fear for their safety.¹⁸

Despite national attention and outcry from Jewish organizations, the University of Florida's reaction asserted that its role requires remaining neutral in response to student speech and to let the marketplace of ideas drown out a particularly odious idea."¹⁹ While we cannot prevent every antisemitic incident, we must look closely at the robustness of the institutional response—or lack thereof. Whether or not it was intended, the university's response suggests that academic freedom somehow encompasses the right to promote age-old antisemitic canards in scholarly venues. The response abets precisely the kind of faculty-enabled antisemitism that a non-politicized OCR with resources and staff could have promptly and vigorously investigated before March 2025 when a majority of its offices were shuttered and staff with appropriate expertise were fired.

¹⁵ Grace Gilson, *Florida campus roiled after antisemitic student wins law school award for paper defending white supremacy*, JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY, (June 23, 2025), <https://www.jta.org/2025/06/23/united-states/florida-campus-roiled-after-antisemitic-student-wins-law-school-award-for-paper-defending-white-supremacy>

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Hillel International, *Top 60 Colleges by Jewish Population*, <https://www.hillel.org/top-60-jewish-colleges/>.

¹⁸ Richard Fausset, N.Y. TIMES, *supra* note 14.

¹⁹ Grace McClung, *UF law student trespassed from campus after racist, antisemitic social media posts*, THE INDEPENDENT FLORIDA ALLIGATOR, (April 21, 2025), <https://www.alligator.org/article/2025/04/uf-law-student-trespassed-from-campus-after-racist-antisemitic-social-media-posts>.

These examples from Stanford, the University of Vermont, and the University of Florida reveal a concerning trend that has been replicated to varying degrees in university classrooms across the country. In some cases, students speak up and the University takes appropriate action to eliminate the hostile environment for Jewish students. However, in too many cases, a failed response by the university results in students dropping out of classes, changing majors, or leaving the university altogether. The chilling effect on Jewish participation in academic and campus life is undeniable.

The successful investigation of these cases by OCR pursuant to Title VI, and the resulting settlement agreements, demonstrate that academic freedom does not protect faculty conduct that targets students based on their shared ancestry or ethnic identity, creates hostile educational environments, or uses students' backgrounds to shame or segregate them. The line is crossed when pedagogical choices become identity-based targeting that interferes with students' equal access to education.

Exclusion from Student Clubs and Activities

Beyond the classroom, one of the key features of a quality education offered by universities is access to clubs and activities where students pursue their interests, acquire new skills, and build social and professional networks that serve them beyond their college career. Jewish students at several universities report that an antisemitic hostile environment on campus forced them to distance themselves from their actual or perceived Jewish identity or relationship with or connection to Israel in order to maintain friendships or participate in organizations or social justice movements they've long supported. This constitutes a barrier to their full participation in the learning experience and can contribute to a hostile environment.

The bottom line is this: No students, including Jewish students, should be forced to choose between their identity and their social acceptance. This includes their connection to or aspiration for a Jewish homeland, whether they express that by specifically identifying with Zionism or generally identifying as Jewish.

Where Does Political Speech Cross Over into the Targeting of Jews?

There is robust debate, including within the Jewish community, about some aspects of how to discern when criticizing or protesting Israel crosses a line into antisemitism. In addition to the three most prominent definitions or definitions crafted by individual organizations, one university antisemitism task force developed a definition drawing directly on the experiences of their own students.²⁰

²⁰ Columbia University Task Force on Antisemitism, REPORT #2: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF ANTISEMITISM AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING SHARED VALUES AND INCLUSION

There is a broad area of agreement and consensus that can and does serve as an effective benchmark for distinguishing between political speech and antisemitism. Where advocacy against Zionism or Israel is expressed using traditional antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories, when a Jewish student is targeted because of their actual or perceived connection to or empathy for Israel, or blamed for actions by the State of Israel, a line is crossed. Appendix II to my statement includes a selection of more detailed, helpful explainers and video resources.

Free expression is a bedrock of any campus community. That means provocative, political or even offensive opinion-based speech is protected. However, even protected speech may be found to be discriminatory or could indicate the presence of a bias motive when examining incidents of identity-based harassment. One example might be chants intentionally directed at a Jewish student saying that “Israel is committing genocide” or “No Zionists wanted here.” That is because, when expression targets individuals because of their identity, or their membership in a protected class, there is a basis to investigate whether campus rules or Title VI lines have been crossed if speech, which may otherwise be protected by the First Amendment, contributes to harassment or a hostile environment. Through training and policy guidance for students and faculty, universities can create a safe and welcoming environment for Jewish students by providing more explicit guidance on when speech about Israel and Zionism may be considered discriminatory harassment. [New York University’s Guidance and Expectations on Student Conduct](#) provides a good model.²¹ Columbia University’s Anti-Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment Policy guidance includes a relevant [illustrative case study](#).²²

The Roadmap to an Effective Response

Despite these serious challenges, we have robust legal tools to address them. Title VI, existing laws related to hate crimes and harassment, and university codes of conduct that draw on them, already equip colleges and universities with the tools to respond to most antisemitic incidents, and for enforcement agencies like OCR to act when they don’t.

(Aug. 30, 2024), <https://president.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/Announcements/Report-2-Task-Force-on-Antisemitism.pdf>.

²¹ New York Univ., *Guidance and Expectations on Student Conduct*, <https://www.nyu.edu/students/student-information-and-resources/student-community-standards/nyu-guidance-expectations-student-conduct.html> (providing guidance on when speech about Israel and Zionism may constitute discriminatory harassment).

²² Columbia Univ., *Anti-Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment Policy, Student Scenarios*, <https://institutionalequity.columbia.edu/content/student-scenarios> (including illustrative case studies on discriminatory harassment).

The law's hostile environment standard captures the full range of antisemitic conduct when it becomes severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive enough to deny equal educational access.²³ The enforcement mechanisms are both comprehensive and flexible—OCR (when adequately staffed) can investigate complaints, negotiate detailed resolution agreements, monitor compliance over years, initiate directed investigations and compliance reviews, and ultimately seek to terminate federal funding for persistent violations. Importantly, as an administrative enforcement agency, OCR accepts complaints filed by anyone, even if they aren't the victim of the discriminatory conduct, and it has historically taken the position that it will open an investigation in every case where the complaint alleges a violation of the law that is within OCR's jurisdiction. Moreover, if OCR opens an investigation into discrimination unrelated to antisemitism and later discovers there is also reason for concern about antisemitic discrimination, it can, and historically has, expanded its investigation to address it.

As enforced by OCR, Title VI requires universities to respond promptly and effectively to known discrimination. This includes conducting thorough investigations, implementing interim protective measures, remedying hostile environments, and preventing recurrence. Universities cannot simply address individual incidents in isolation but must examine whether discrimination has become systemic. Where institutional responses have been inadequate due to flawed reporting mechanisms or enforcement delays, this could be evidence of a Title VI violation, and the law may require revisions to these processes.

As historically enforced by administrations of both parties, Title VI skillfully balances civil rights protection with First Amendment values. While universities cannot prohibit protected speech, they must address targeted harassment or true threats that create a hostile environment for students. Many universities have developed clear guidance for students and faculty—as Columbia's task force recommended—illustrating the difference between protected discourse and discriminatory conduct.²⁴

During the previous administration, following the rise in antisemitism complaints, especially after October 7, OCR used its enforcement power and its ability to obtain and monitor agreements mandating remedial and preventive action as part of an unprecedented response. OCR made complaint filing easier, issued multiple guidance documents to help universities responsible for protecting their Jewish students to understand how the law applied to the types of incidents occurring on college campuses, regularly briefed Jewish community organizations and Congress on its

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Columbia Univ. Task Force on Antisemitism, REPORT #1: RULES AND DEMONSTRATIONS (2024), <https://president.columbia.edu/content/report-1-task-force-antisemitism> (recommending development of clear scenarios illustrating the difference between protected discourse and discriminatory conduct).

efforts, and secured a record number of resolution agreements—demonstrating that existing law works when properly implemented.²⁵ This work was conducted despite skyrocketing increases in complaints, without corresponding staff increases, and repeated requests for increased funding going unfulfilled by Congress.

In addition, private rights of action under Title VI provide additional accountability, with lawsuits that have led to comprehensive Title VI settlements.²⁶

Success Stories: Evidence that Targeted Enforcement Works

The University of Vermont resolution obtained by OCR provides compelling evidence of what proper enforcement can achieve. After OCR's investigation identified serious concerns—including an instructor tweeting about reducing Zionist students' grades, students throwing rocks at the Hillel building, and exclusion of Jewish students from campus organizations—the university entered a comprehensive resolution agreement. The agreement was crafted to remedy the hostile environment created for these students and prevent future incidents of antisemitism on campus, and to ensure that, if incidents do occur, the university responds in a prompt and effective manner to protect the Jewish community on campus.

Here is how the campus Hillel director described the change following the resolution agreement: "Jewish life at the University of Vermont has improved remarkably since April 3, 2023." Jewish students now receive responses to bias incidents within 24 hours. The Hillel center reported a 40% increase in daily usage. Parents feel confident sending their children there. "In short, Jewish life at UVM is thriving"—proof that proper enforcement creates lasting positive change.²⁷

Additional examples of effective enforcement in recent resolutions underscore the point that there are powerful and effective tools that work. At Brown University, the university addressed a campus climate marked by anxiety, tension, and fear. After receiving some 75 reports of alleged antisemitic, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Muslim harassment against students from October 2023 through late March 2024, the university entered into a comprehensive resolution agreement with OCR that requires annual campus-wide training on nondiscrimination, a campus climate survey, and review of all previous

²⁵ Office for Civil Rights, PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS, *supra* note 2, at 14.

²⁶ See, e.g., *Brandeis Center Settlement with North Carolina State Is a Significant Step Forward in Combating Campus Anti-Semitism* (press release), (Aug. 1, 2024), <https://brandeiscenter.com/brandeis-center-settlement-with-north-carolina-state-is-a-significant-step-forward-in-combating-campus-anti-semitism/>.

²⁷ Matt Vogel, *UVM's Remarkable Turnaround Has Improved Life for Jewish Students*, VT DIGGER (Feb. 20, 2024), <https://vtdigger.org/2024/02/20/matt-vogel-uvms-remarkable-turnaround-has-improved-life-for-jewish-students/>.

complaints using proper Title VI standards.²⁸ Similarly, City University of New York's (CUNY's) 25 campuses committed to reopen or initiate investigations of national origin and shared ancestry discrimination complaints (including antisemitism, provide training to employees responsible for investigating such complaints, and ensure each campus administers climate surveys and develops enforceable action plans to address concerns identified in the surveys.²⁹ Lafayette College, after failing to properly extend Title VI legal requirements to social media harassment, agreed to revised policies, campus-wide training, and ongoing monitoring.³⁰ The University of Michigan, despite receiving 75 reports of shared ancestry discrimination from September 2022 through February 2024, failed to assess whether incidents created hostile environments, but through OCR's resolution agreement, the university now has in place clear procedures for evaluation and response.³¹ In response to OCR investigations, institutions transform policies and practices, creating safer environments for all students.

The remedial tools that universities agreed to implement in the foregoing cases are not new. In fact, the OCR applied them in antisemitism resolutions during the first Trump administration. In 2019, OCR investigated a complaint against Duke University and the University of North Carolina (UNC) regarding a Middle East Studies conference that included an overtly antisemitic musical performance by a rapper who told the audience "This is my anti-Semitic song" and encouraged antisemitic sentiment.³² Following OCR's investigation, Duke voluntarily entered into a resolution agreement, committing to strengthen its public statements against discrimination, revise its campus

²⁸ Letter from Paul Easton, Program Manager/Supervisory General Attorney, U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, to Christina Paxson, President, Brown University (July 8, 2024), <https://ocracas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/01242116-a.pdf> and Resolution Agreement Between Brown University and U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, Complaint No. 01-24-2116 (July 3, 2024), <https://www.brown.edu/sites/default/files/resolution-agreement-07-08-2024.PDF>.

²⁹ Letter from Rachel Pomerantz, Regional Director, U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, to Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Chancellor, City University of New York (June 17, 2024), <https://ocracas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/02222034-a.pdf> and Resolution Agreement Between City University of New York and U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, Case Numbers 02-22-2034, 02-24-2364, 02-20-2335, 02-21-2010, 02-24-2377, 02-21-2082, 02-24-2365, 02-22-2094, and 02-22-2249 (June 10, 2024), <https://ocracas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/02222034-b.pdf>.

³⁰ Letter from Beth Gellman-Beer, Director, U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, to Nicole Hurd, President, Lafayette College (June 21, 2024), <https://ocracas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/03242029-a.pdf> and Resolution Agreement Between Lafayette College and U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, Complaint No. 03-24-2029 (June 20, 2024), <https://ocracas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/03242029-b.pdf>.

³¹ Letter from Brian Gnadtt, Regional Program Manager, U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, to Kelly Cruz, Assoc. Gen. Counsel, Univ. of Mich. (June 17, 2024) (regarding OCR Docket Numbers 15-24-2066 and 15-24-2128), <https://ocracas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/15242066-a.pdf> and <https://ocracas.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ocr-letters-and-agreements/15242066-b.pdf>.

³² Letter from Ralph A. Suris, Chief Regional Attorney, U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights, to Dr. Vincent E. Price, President, Duke Univ. (Dec. 10, 2019) (regarding OCR Complaint No. 11-19-2214), <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/more/11192214-a.pdf>.

antidiscrimination policy to explicitly prohibit antisemitic harassment, and implement mandatory antisemitism training for students, faculty, and staff.³³ This resolution, which mirrored a similar agreement UNC had entered with OCR two months earlier, exemplifies the continuity of OCR's investigative and resolution processes that, until January 2025, were effectively and vigilantly applied across different presidential administrations.

The effectiveness of the Title VI process provided the basis for a bill recently passed by the New York State Legislature that requires the appointment of a Title VI coordinator at every college and university in the state. Echoing the terms of Title VI resolution agreements, the bill further requires the state's division of human rights to develop Title VI training for students and employees and mandates that the coordinator must notify all students and employees of the institution's policies and procedures for reporting discrimination and harassment on an annual basis.³⁴

Why the Current Approach Fails

The current administration's approach reveals a fundamental contradiction: claiming to fight antisemitism while systematically dismantling the infrastructure needed to combat it. They have gutted OCR's budget, eliminated the majority of regional offices with decades of Title VI expertise, and conducted mass layoffs of experienced investigators. They cannot conduct thorough investigations or fulfill the monitoring responsibilities spelled out in the agreements, because they have eliminated the personnel needed to do the work.

In place of proper investigations, the current OCR political leadership relies on press reports and external sources rather than responding to actual complaints from harmed students and conducting actual Title VI investigations—as Harvard correctly noted in its response to the administration's violation letter,³⁵ which was sent by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) OCR.³⁶ This administration is imposing draconian penalties that are completely divorced from supporting Jewish students or addressing antisemitism. Moreover, the massive threatened or imposed penalties represent an

³³ Duke Resolution Agreement, U.S. Dep't of Educ., Office for Civil Rights & Duke Univ., OCR Complaint No. 11-19-2214 (Dec. 3, 2019), <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/more/11192214-b.pdf>.

³⁴ The bill passed both houses of the New York Legislature and is pending with the Governor for her signature. See N.Y. State Assembly Bill A5448B (2025).

³⁵ Letter from Paula M. Stannard, Director, HHS Office for Civil Rights, to Alan M. Garber, Office of the President, Harvard University, et al. (July 13, 2025) (Notice of Violation: Harvard University (OCR Trans. No. DO-25-607541-RV-CRR-Rac)), <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/harvard-title-vi-notice-violation.pdf>.

³⁶ See, e.g., Avery Lotz, *Harvard's Treatment of Jewish Students Violates Civil Rights Law, HHS Says*, AXIOS (June 30, 2025), <https://www.axios.com/2025/06/30/trump-harvard-title-vi-hhs>.

unprecedented government overreach of its authority that even the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page condemned.³⁷ When findings of a violation have been made, it has been done without anything approximating a proper investigation. The HHS OCR letters of findings under the current political leadership amount to ultimatums. They do not include the requisite evidentiary support and legal analysis and are not accompanied by a resolution agreement or any other direction to the university regarding the steps it needs to take to come into compliance with Title VI. Instead, the administration has sent letters riddled with inaccuracies, political hyperbole, and threats of a government take-over of higher education that undermine the credibility of the agency and its leaders.

What we are seeing are attacks on universities that have already devoted extensive efforts to addressing antisemitism through their own task forces resulting in changes to policies and practices that will genuinely make an impact on eliminating antisemitism on campus. The current administration's approach uses antisemitism as a pretext to launch ideological assaults on higher education itself. Stripping funding hurts the very students these actions claim to protect.

In addition to using the pretext of combating antisemitism to attack higher education, we are seeing it deployed as a weapon in the administration's effort to deport students for constitutionally protected speech and without regard for their due process rights.

Meanwhile, OCR has been gutted. Seven of twelve regional offices have been shut down, and the staff has been cut in half. It was recently reported that under its current leadership, OCR dismissed 3,424 complaints in a three-month period from March to June of this year, without evidence that they were properly evaluated to determine if there were students in harms' way. This is an unprecedented number in such a short timeframe.³⁸ Decades of collective expertise, on antisemitism and other issues has been eliminated, a loss that hurts all students, including Jewish students.

Jewish leaders have spoken loud and clear. They have called on the current administration to stop using antisemitism as a camel's nose under the tent to further its crackdown on higher education and on immigrants, especially foreign students. Hundreds of leaders, organizations, and Rabbis from all over the country spoke out against the revocation of foreign student visas earlier this spring and the detention of pro-Palestinian student activists like Mahmoud Khalil of Columbia and Rumeysa Ozturk of Tufts. Many Jewish leaders noted that, while they may find someone's views

³⁷ Editorial Board, *Donald Trump Tries to Run Harvard*, WALL ST. J. (Apr. 15, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/donald-trump-harvard-funding-conditions-constitution-congress-c26040f8>.

³⁸ Bianca Quilantan, Rebecca Carballo & Juan Perez Jr., *Education Department dismisses thousands of civil rights complaints at an 'unheard of' pace*, POLITICO, (July 8, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/08/education-departments-civil-rights-complaint-dismissals-prompt-concern-from-trump-opponents-00439118>.

offensive, hurtful or wrong, they are committed to the notion that everyone deserves due process—with no exceptions. A group of some [565 Jewish clergy called for “the moral use of U.S. law,”](#) stating: “As Jews and as Americans, we refuse to remain silent at the co-opting of our nation’s statutes and express alarm about the path down which it leads. We demand that the administration abandon its manipulative interpretation of law and restore a commitment to the inalienable rights that are the source of our country’s greatness.”³⁹

As fearful as Jews are of the serious threat rising antisemitism poses, most Jews are more fearful of the erosion of constitutional rights they have long relied upon to protect them. According to a recent survey, [a majority of Jews surveyed do not approve of this administration’s approach to antisemitism.](#)⁴⁰ Over seventy percent oppose the administration’s practice of deporting immigrants without a court hearing.

History shows Jews thrive when democratic norms and institutions are strong. Weakening universities weakens democracy. Jewish students need allies across communities. The administration’s singular focus is on antisemitism and not on the other forms of hate that also are present on campuses. This ultimately will make Jewish students feel singled out and potentially less safe. Indeed, Jewish students have expressed fear being scapegoated for harsh measures taken in their name.

When government truly wants to strengthen enforcement of the laws that protect against antisemitism, it invests in responsible offices and experienced personnel, it doesn’t eviscerate the agency and fire critical staff. The current approach creates, at best, an illusion of strong action while compromising effectiveness. It’s a dangerous gambit that makes Jewish students less safe while undermining the democratic norms that religious minorities rely on.

Claiming that combating antisemitism justifies these attacks on democratic norms and due process undermines genuine, needed efforts to combat antisemitism. When the administration claims to fight antisemitism while simultaneously gutting \$30 million in hate crime prevention grants and decimating the budget and staff of OCR it reveals that a desire to score political points takes precedence over Jewish safety.

³⁹ HIAS, *Jewish Clergy Speak Out on the Immoral Use of the Law* (press release), (April 22, 2025), <https://hias.org/news/jewish-clergy-speak-out-immoral-use-law/>.

⁴⁰ Ben Sales, *72% of American Jews Disapprove of Donald Trump’s Performance So Far, Poll Finds*, JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY, (Apr. 24, 2025), <https://www.jta.org/2025/04/24/politics/72-of-american-jews-disapprove-of-donald-trumps-performance-so-far-poll-finds>.

A [broad coalition of mainstream Jewish organizations](#) recently rejected “the false choice between confronting antisemitism and upholding democracy.”⁴¹ As they noted, “Our safety as Jews has always been tied to the rule of law, to the safety of others, to the strength of civil society, and to the protection of rights and liberties for all.”⁴²

Anti-democratic actions taken in our name don't make Jews safer—they make us targets. That is why Jewish faculty and students at Berkeley, Brown, Harvard, Georgetown, Columbia, and elsewhere have condemned the administration's approach.⁴³ As hundreds of Jewish professors wrote: “Harming universities makes everyone less safe, including Jews... Moreover, destroying universities in the name of Jews risks making Jews less safe by setting them up to be scapegoats.”⁴⁴

Recommendations: A Path Forward

Implement Recognized Solutions

Congress should build on what communities and antisemitism and hate prevention experts have had success with rather than dismantling successful approaches for partisan reasons. The [National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#),⁴⁵ developed with input from over a thousand ideologically diverse Jewish community leaders and experts, provides a comprehensive roadmap containing over 100 specific recommendations. It was applauded at the time of its release in May 2023 by a broad spectrum of Jewish leaders and elected officials from both parties. Ignoring or disregarding it simply because the National Strategy emerged during a different administration sacrifices Jewish students' safety on the altar of political expediency.

The path forward requires enabling OCR to do its job effectively. This means restoring and increasing funding to at least \$200 million to handle the current caseload, rehiring

⁴¹ *Broad Coalition of Mainstream Jewish Organizations Release Statement Rejecting False Choice Between Jewish Safety and Democracy* (press release), (April 15, 2025), <https://jewishpublicaffairs.org/press-release/jewishcommunalstatement/>.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ See, e.g., Sebastian B. Connolly & Julia A. Karabolli, *Jewish Harvard Students Sign Open Letter Opposing Trump's Funding Threats*, HARV. CRIMSON (Apr. 17, 2025), <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/4/17/Jewish-students-letter-to-trump/>; William C. Mao & Veronica H. Paulus, *Dozens of Jewish Harvard Faculty Sign Statement Denouncing Arrest of Mahmoud Khalil*, HARV. CRIMSON (Mar. 24, 2025), <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/3/24/jewish-affiliates-condemn-trump/>.

⁴⁴ See Matt Shuham, *Hundreds Of Jewish Academics Condemn Trump Attacks On Universities*, HUFFPOST (Mar. 19, 2025), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/jewish-academics-trump-columbia-antisemitism_n_67db29a5e4b0abb74b13dbb7.

⁴⁵ The White House, *THE U.S. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COUNTER ANTISEMITISM* (May 2023), <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf>.

experienced staff, restoring regional offices, and providing resources for long-term monitoring of resolution agreements. It is no coincidence that given the skeleton staff, none of the OCR resolutions announced since January 20 address antisemitism. Educational institutions have already invested significant effort and resources through their task forces or the resolution agreements they have entered—what they need now is implementation support, not punitive measures that ultimately harm students.

Maintain Democratic Norms and Build Coalitions

While the focus of today's hearing is antisemitism, we must recognize that rising antisemitism is part of a broader rise in hate in our nation, and that addressing hate is not the responsibility of one community alone but requires a united effort across society.

This reality was reflected in the fact that where universities fail to uphold their responsibility to enforce Title VI to protect Jewish students, they often fail to do so with respect to other groups as well. This is why many of OCR resolution agreements address not only antisemitic harassment but also address other forms of racial harassment, including anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-Palestinian harassment.

As Rabbi David Saperstein recently stated in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Health Education Labor, and Pensions Committee: "We cannot ensure that Jewish students are safe on campus until all students are safe. We cannot effectively bar discrimination against Jews unless the mechanisms against discrimination are robust enough to bar discrimination against all protected groups."⁴⁶

Jewish safety has always been tied to the strength of democratic institutions and the rule of law. As [60 of the country's leading civil rights organizations](#) recently affirmed in a joint statement: we must ensure that the legitimate fear[s] in the Jewish community—are not exploited to justify inhumane policies or to target those who peacefully exercise their First Amendment rights."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Antisemitic Disruptions on Campus: Ensuring Safe Learning Environments for All Students*: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on Health, Educ., Labor & Pensions, 119th Cong.1 (2025) (testimony of David Saperstein, Director Emeritus, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism), <https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/06e69363-9e5d-54f9-8019-dbe95168b2a9/Saperstein%20Testimony.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, *Civil Rights Coalition Joint Statement on Antisemitic Hate Crimes* (press release), (June 5, 2025), <https://jewishpublicaffairs.org/press-release/civil-rights-coalition-joint-statement-on-antisemitic-hate-crimes/>.

Specific Recommended Congressional Actions

1. **Restore OCR Resources:** Fund OCR at levels necessary to conduct thorough investigations and monitor compliance. Despite its role as the office with responsibility for enforcing Title VI at universities, this administration's FY 2026 budget request for OCR is \$91 million, a \$49 million cut from the previous year.
2. **Support Prevention:** Restore the \$30 million in DOJ hate crime prevention funds that were eliminated.
3. **Fulfill Oversight Responsibilities:** Hold the administration accountable for how its actions to address antisemitism are impacting education and to explain how stripping funding from universities and gutting the office charged and funded by Congress to enforce Title VI is effective. Also conduct oversight of how the current administration's antisemitism investigations depart from the Title VI process that has been followed by OCR in every administration irrespective of political party until now.
4. **Enhance Monitoring:** The Department of Education can encourage and support all universities to conduct climate surveys and publicly report on resolution agreement implementation progress.
5. **Expand Education:** Fund comprehensive antisemitism education that addresses both historical and contemporary forms.
6. **Maintain Bipartisan Approach:** Prioritize concern for Jewish safety above partisan politics.

Conclusion

Members of the Committee, we stand at a critical juncture. We can continue down a destructive path—gutting enforcement capacity, attacking universities, and using the fear of Jewish students to advance a political agenda. Or we can return to evidence-based solutions that actually protect Jewish students while strengthening the institutions that have allowed American Jews to flourish in our country.

I've spent much of my career fighting antisemitism. I've seen what works and what doesn't. Political theater doesn't make Jewish students safer. Destroying the offices meant to protect them doesn't help. What matters most are adequate resources, proper enforcement, raising awareness, and bringing communities into the fight against antisemitism instead of using the issue to indict others.

What helps is setting aside partisanship and rallying together around supporting the tools, effective strategies, and dedicated professionals that have the best chance at success. What helps is the political will and bipartisan consensus to fund enforcement

and the wisdom to recognize that Jewish students' safety depends on strong democratic institutions that protect everyone's rights.

Congress should focus on providing OCR with the resources to do its job effectively rather than using antisemitism as a pretext for ideologically or politically motivated attacks on higher education. Jewish students deserve real protection and real solutions—not political games played in their name.

Every day we delay, Jewish students are hurting unnecessarily. But every day also offers an opportunity to choose the path of effective action over empty rhetoric. I urge you to make that choice—for the sake of Jewish students today and for the democratic values that ensure all students can pursue their education free from discrimination and hate.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I look forward to your questions and to talking more about how to ensure that no student faces antisemitism or any form of discrimination or harassment because of who they are.

APPENDIX I

Jewish Leader and Organization Statements

[What Does Dismantling the Education Department Mean for Jewish Safety and Democracy?](#), Jewish Council for Public Affairs Fact Sheet on Jewish Safety and the Department of Education, March 20, 2025

[President Trump Is Not a King: Congress Must Stop His Attack on Education](#), National Council of Jewish Women, March 20, 2025

[Why Trump's attack on democracy is as deep a Jewish concern as antisemitism or Israel](#) by Dr. Yehuda Kurzer, President Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, March 3, 2025

[Trump's Columbia attacks won't stop antisemitism. So why are Jewish leaders applauding?](#) The Forward, March 10, 2025

[Jewish Social Justice Organizations oppose Mahmoud Khalil detention](#)

[U.S. Jewish Groups Warn Trump's Education Cuts Threaten Fight Against Antisemitism](#), Haaretz, March 21, 2025

[Statement from over 100 Jewish organizations](#) on Recent Attacks on Democratic Norms and Values, February 7, 2025

[Jewish Senators Letter to President Trump on the Weaponization of Antisemitism](#), April 24, 2025

[Rejecting the False Choice between Jewish Safety and Democracy](#), Statement from: Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, National Council of Jewish Women, American Conference of Cantors, Central Conference of American Rabbis, HIAS, Rabbinical Assembly, Reconstructing Judaism, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, and the Union for Reform Judaism, April 15, 2025

[565 Jewish Clergy speaking out against](#) the immoral use of U.S. law. "As Jews and as Americans, we refuse to remain silent at the co-opting of our nation's statutes and express alarm about the path down which it leads. We demand that the administration abandon its manipulative interpretation of law and restore a commitment to the inalienable rights that are the source of our country's greatness." April 22, 2025

Over 500 rabbis sign letter rejecting Trump's antisemitism agenda, [JTA](#) April 28, 2025

[Jewish Americans Are Sick of Trump Exploiting Them](#), HuffPost, 3/13/2025

[National Council of Jewish Women Calls Department of Education Mass Firings an Attack on Students](#), March 12, 2025

['Not in our name': Jews in NYC say Trump attacks on Gaza activists not about fighting antisemitism](#), NY Daily News, April 19, 2025

[Many Jews say Trump is politicizing the fight against antisemitism](#), Washington Post, April 25, 2025

The New Republic: [Trump's Crackdown on "Antisemitism" is Making Jews Less Safe](#), 3/11/2025

["Trump is using antisemitism as pretext to attack higher education, undermine democracy"](#), Rabbi Jill Jacobs, CEO of T'ruah, Boston Globe, March 21, 2025

APPENDIX II

Antisemitism Resources

Government Documents

[The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#), May 2023

[Protecting Civil Rights: Highlights of Activities Office for Civil Rights 2021-2025](#), January 2025

[OCR 2024 Fiscal Year Annual Report](#), December 2024

[OCR 2021-2025 Highlights of Activities](#), January 2025

Examples of Department of Education Resolution Agreements

[Johns Hopkins University](#), January 5, 2025

[Brown](#), July 3, 2024

[Lafayette College](#) - June 24, 2024

[CUNY](#) letter and [Resolution Agreement](#) - June 17, 2024

[University of Michigan](#), June 17, 2024

[University of Vermont](#), April 3, 2023

Antisemitism Explainers and Guides

- [Video Explainer Series](#) by Yair Rosenberg, The Atlantic
- [Antisemitism in our Past and Present](#): Short video, Berkeley Center for Jewish Studies
- [What is Antisemitism](#), The Holocaust Encyclopedia, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
- [Antisemitism x Democracy - Aspen Institute Landscape Analysis](#), 2024
- Perplexity, The Nexus Project, September 2024
- [Guide to Identifying Antisemitism in Debates About Israel](#), the Nexus Project, 2022
- [A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism](#), T'ruah, the Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, August 2024
- [Dismantling Antisemitism](#), July 2024 - a message guide for progressive communities.
- AJC: [Translate Hate Glossary](#)

University Antisemitism Task Force Reports

- Columbia University, [Report #1](#), March 2024; [Report #2](#), August, 2024
- [University of Pennsylvania](#), May 20, 2024
- [Stanford University](#), May 31, 2024
- [University of Maryland](#), Fall 2024
- [Harvard University](#), April 29, 2025
- [Recommendations of Cornell University Antisemitism Task Force](#), May 2, 2024