

**Written Testimony of Judson Horras, President and CEO of the North American  
Interfraternity Conference (NIC)**

**Before the U.S. House of Representatives: Subcommittee on Higher Education and  
Workforce Development for the House Education and Workforce Committee**

**April 29, 2026**

I am Jud Horras, President and CEO of the North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC). The NIC is a trade association of 61 national and international fraternities. As the 2025-26 school year comes to a close, our fraternities collectively have 250,000 undergraduate members at over 6,000 chapters and 6 million living alumni.

While I am here today representing the NIC, I would be remiss if I did not mention the 26 sororities who belong to the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), the Divine Nine fraternities and sororities who belong to the National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPHC), the 18 fraternities and sorority who belong to the National Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Panhellenic Association (NAPA), and the 17 fraternities and sororities who belong to the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO). Collectively, the nation's fraternities and sororities represent more than 750,000 undergraduates at 12,000 chapters on nearly 700 college campuses and we have more than 9 million alumni nationwide. All of these fraternal organizations share the NIC's mission of transforming collegiate men and women lives for the better via membership in single-sex student organizations.

Like the United States, the college fraternity movement is celebrating its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026. The first secret society was the Flat Hat Society at the College of William & Mary. It was founded in 1750 and included Thomas Jefferson as a member. Those first members were men who would go on to shape the future of this country, and the same is true of fraternity men today. Phi Beta Kappa was the nation's first fraternity, founded in December of 1776, and would operate as a fraternity for decades before evolving into the honor society we know today. 19 fraternity alumni have served as Presidents of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Fraternity alumni rank amongst the nation's most prominent business, civic, scientific, religious, artistic, and athletic leaders at rates far ahead of their share of our overall population. Similarly, 27% of this Congress are members of single-sex fraternities or sororities, even though fraternity and sorority alumni make up a very small percentage of the American adult population.

The NIC is an extraordinarily vibrant collection of organizations with diverse backgrounds. Our membership includes the largest single-sex Jewish fraternities, three of the five

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nicfraternity.org/uFAQs/u-s-presidents/>

national African American fraternities that are part of the Divine Nine, as well as fraternities whose cultural roots are tied to Asian Americans and Indian Americans. While the names of our organizations may differ, every fraternity shares a few key commonalities today: (1) we want to offer a single-sex organization where men commit to living by and living up to common ideals; (2) we strive to support each other to excel in the classroom; (3) we expect to serve as leaders in building a better campus culture and better communities where we live; (4) we are drivers of unique and sustained community service initiatives that make a difference in the lives of others; and (5) we foster a community where men can provide lifetime support to each other. Fraternities are a key asset to first-generation college men who are looking for a support system to help them traverse the obstacle course from freshman convocation to graduation. In a world where college students, like America, are increasingly self-sorting into a daily life spent only with people who share their political views, fraternity chapters are the last best places on campus today where men from all backgrounds, experiences, religious beliefs, and political beliefs still live, learn, and love together.

### **Fraternities Are An Invaluable Asset to Higher Education And Our Nation**

This week about one million American young men are sitting with their parents trying to make the biggest decision of their lives – where am I going to go to college this fall? It is a nervous time for parents, one I have experienced myself with my own daughter and that I will go through again next April with my son who will soon be a high school senior. Parents want their children to make the college decision that gives their sons and daughters the best chance of long-term success and this decision is the first big fork in the road of life for these students.

Making the decision about where to go to college is just the first step towards becoming a college graduate, and the road between matriculation and graduation can be long and full of potholes. Now imagine if you could tell those young men and their parents sitting around the dinner table this week picking a college that once they get on campus there is an organization their freshman son could join that would have a statistically meaningful chance of improving all the key foundations of student success. That is exactly what happens when you join a fraternity. Today's fraternity student has lower rates of anxiety and depression,<sup>2</sup> are better at peer accountability,<sup>3</sup> are more supportive of their alma mater,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mental Health and Wellness for Fraternity and Sorority Members; Biddix, Assalone and Grace ([https://foundationfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PERC\\_Mental-Health-Study-2020.pdf](https://foundationfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PERC_Mental-Health-Study-2020.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Peer Accountability; Plaid 2022 (<https://www.naca.org/resource/jcaps-issue-14-grace.html>)

<sup>4</sup> Fraternities and Sororities: Experiences and Outcomes in College, Work and Life; Gallup 2021 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h4WwoVv1pQZOGGVzfQhtsdIC-K1PmxTC/view?usp=sharing>)

have higher first-year retention rates and learning gains in college,<sup>5</sup> feel more supported in college,<sup>6</sup> are more engaged in their community,<sup>7</sup> are better at diverse viewpoint conversations,<sup>8</sup> and have more successful careers.<sup>9</sup> The fraternity experience is such a positive difference maker in the lives of so many young men – that’s why the NIC works so hard to make sure there is a fraternity experience for every young man who wants one.

Fraternities are private single-sex organizations, but our existence ultimately provides a number of public benefits to our host institutions, our communities, and our nation. The collective grade point average of fraternity men and sorority women is higher than the all-male and all-female grade point average on about 95% of the campuses where we exist today. On the average campus, fraternity members hold an outsized number of leadership positions in other student organizations and also are often well-represented in leadership positions on the school’s athletic teams.

College fraternities today are the nation’s largest values-based men’s organizations on campus, at a moment when more men than ever are looking for guidance and self-improvement. While the individual values of each fraternity are different, common values generally encompass friendship, morality, scholarship, and patriotism. At a moment in time when Jewish students nationwide face rampant antisemitism in their daily life on campus, fraternity men at Zeta Beta Tau, Sigma Alpha Mu, and Tau Epsilon Phi are leading campaigns against hate on campus, and tens of thousands of men from EVERY fraternity are standing in solidarity with their interfraternal Jewish brothers and sisters. Similarly, when campus protests in 2024 were roiling college campuses, it was a group of brave men from multiple fraternities at the University of North Carolina who spontaneously stepped forward and prevented an angry mob from tearing down the American flag.

Collectively, fraternities and sororities are the largest provider of community service hours and raise tens of millions of dollars for charity each year. For example, students and alumni of Sigma Chi fraternity recently raised \$11 million for the Huntsman Cancer Initiative at the University of Utah and followed it up in 2025 by announcing a \$31 million pledge to fund a new Center of Advanced Therapeutics. In 2027, Pi Kappa Phi’s national philanthropy, the Ability Experience, celebrates 50 years of a nationwide cycling expedition that has not only

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<sup>5</sup> The Fraternity/Sorority Experience Revisited: The Relationships between Fraternity/Sorority Membership and Student Engagement, Learning Outcomes, Grades, and Satisfaction with College; Pike and Wiese, Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship (<https://www.naca.org/resource/jcaps-issue-12-pike.html>)

<sup>6</sup> Peer Accountability; Plaid 2022

<sup>7</sup> Perspectives on Fraternity and Sorority Life; Positive Youth Development, EverFi (<https://nicfraternity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2021-EverFi-NIC-Research-Report-Final.pdf>)

<sup>8</sup> The Fraternity/Sorority Experience Revisited: The Relationships between Fraternity/Sorority Membership and Student Engagement, Learning Outcomes, Grades, and Satisfaction with College; Pike and Wiese, Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship

<sup>9</sup> Fraternities and Sororities: Experiences and Outcomes in College, Work and Life; Gallup 2021

raised more than \$30 million for people living with disabilities but also dedicated more than 600,000 volunteer hours to renovating facilities for people with disabilities and has taught generations of students how to be allies to the disabled community.

We are the nation's second-largest provider of college student housing – second only to the host institutions themselves. We operate approximately 3,400 facilities nationwide supporting more than 400,000 students and with a collective replacement value of \$13 billion.<sup>10</sup> Taxpayers at state colleges nationwide would have to borrow billions of dollars to build new residence halls to replace the student housing we currently provide at no expense to the American taxpayer.

In short, if single-sex fraternities did not already exist on American campuses today, policymakers would be looking to create them precisely because of the tangible benefits we provide to young men, the campuses where we operate, the communities we live in, and to our nation.

### **College-Aged Men Are In Crisis Today And Fraternities Can Help**

There is a stark crisis facing young men today and it is well documented. The crisis starts well before men consider college. Young men are now less likely to read proficiently,<sup>11</sup> less likely to graduate high school,<sup>12</sup> and less likely to enroll in college than at any point in modern history.<sup>13</sup> Suicide rates are unacceptably high across our population, but four times higher among men.<sup>14</sup> Author Richard Reeves and others have documented this crisis exhaustively. It did not happen overnight, and it will not be solved overnight. But it demands an urgent, serious response.

Young men now constitute only about 40% of the college population, and it is now common to visit campuses where the gender imbalance is 70-30 women.<sup>15</sup> Men are now 29% more likely to drop out of college than women and 32% less likely to re-enroll.<sup>16</sup> 67% of college women will graduate within six years of enrollment but that number is only 60% for men.<sup>17</sup> College men now earn only 42% of bachelor's degrees, 38% of master's degrees,

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<sup>10</sup> Pennington and Company Annual Greek Housing Survey.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/12/18/fewer-young-men-are-in-college-especially-at-4-year-schools/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://aibm.org/research/male-college-enrollment-and-completion/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.pnas.org/doi/epdf/10.1073/pnas.2002861117>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pnas.org/doi/epdf/10.1073/pnas.2002861117>

<sup>15</sup> <https://hechingerreport.org/women-far-outnumber-men-in-law-school-med-school-vet-school-and-other-professional-programs/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40#:~:text=The%20overall%20%2Dyear%20graduation%20rate%20was%2060%20percent%20for,64%20percent\)%20institutions.](https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40#:~:text=The%20overall%20%2Dyear%20graduation%20rate%20was%2060%20percent%20for,64%20percent)%20institutions.)

<sup>17</sup> [https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40#:~:text=The%20overall%20%2Dyear%20graduation%20rate%20was%2060%20percent%20for,64%20percent\)%20institutions.](https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40#:~:text=The%20overall%20%2Dyear%20graduation%20rate%20was%2060%20percent%20for,64%20percent)%20institutions.)

45% of medical degrees, 45% of dentistry degrees, a minority of law degrees, and 44% of doctoral degrees.<sup>18</sup>

Data compiled for the inaugural Symposium on Young American Men by pollster Cygnal found that fraternity men consistently outperform their Gen-Z peers across every meaningful measure: mental and physical health, personal relationships, campus engagement, and professional preparedness.<sup>19</sup> Another study of more than 100,000 students across 400 campuses found fraternity members graduate at a nearly 5% higher rate than non-affiliated peers.<sup>20</sup> These benefits are even stronger among those who need them most. First-generation college students who join Greek life close the engagement gaps that first-generation status typically creates. Fraternity is often the difference between students who persist in college and those who don't.

Fraternities are not the cure-all remedy for the crisis with young men today, but on the campuses where we exist, we are a critical part of the solution to attract, retain, and graduate young men who can go on to become productive business, cultural and civic leaders of tomorrow.

### **We Must Do Better Preserving the Freedom of Association Rights of College Students**

While we have a 250-year partnership with higher education, **we increasingly find ourselves in a position where universities do not respect the freedom of association rights of their own students.** That problem is bigger for single-sex organizations, and it is especially acute for college fraternities who are often the most highly visible student organizations on campus. The reality is that single-sex fraternities now face rules and restrictions that no other student group would find acceptable and that society would not tolerate at all outside a college campus.

More recently, our reality is that schools are openly discriminating against single-sex organizations like ours. Schools are willing to trample our constitutional rights to freedom of association and due process, and they are comfortable discriminating against the young men they otherwise are working so hard to attract and retain on campus.

We see university violations of student rights falling into four broad categories. First, there are schools like Harvard that attempt to blacklist students for joining single-sex organizations, or Yale which sought to destroy the legal foundation for single-sex

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<sup>18</sup> <https://hechingerreport.org/women-far-outnumber-men-in-law-school-med-school-vet-school-and-other-professional-programs/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cygnal.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Cygnal-poll-of-americas-young-men-2025.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://psmag.com/social-justice/fraternity-sorority-members-likely-graduate-time-greek-women-75861/55>

fraternities to exist. Second, there are schools like Duke and Cal State Chico that are restricting the time, place, and manner of when students can join fraternities even as they allow membership in every other student organization and athletics team the moment you set foot on campus. Third, there are universities like the University of Virginia and the University of Maryland that have imposed collective punishment on thousands of fraternity men for anonymous allegations made against a handful of men of one fraternity. Finally, there is an extensive list of schools who violate the due process rights of their male students when they do not follow outlined policies and procedures outlined in the school's code of conduct for disciplinary proceedings.

### ***Blacklisting and Denying the Right of Single-Sex Fraternities to Exist***

Let me walk through some of the most egregious violations in recent years. Single-sex fraternities and men's-only finals clubs have existed in Cambridge, Massachusetts for more than 200 years. These organizations exist off-campus and do not have university recognition, which means they draw no university support or resources, and they do not use the Harvard name. Single-sex sororities and women's-only finals clubs arrived in Cambridge after Harvard went coed in 1977. Nevertheless, Harvard decided to try and eliminate student involvement in single-sex organizations in 2016 when the Dean of Students imposed a blacklisting policy that illegally penalized students for using their off-campus free time to join single-sex organizations like the ones I represent. Harvard's blacklisting policy meant men who joined a fraternity or finals club were ineligible to: (1) serve as varsity team captains (virtually all team captains at the time were members of fraternities, sororities, and/or single-sex finals clubs); (2) receive an official recommendation for outside awards like the Rhodes, Fullbright and Truman Scholars programs; and (3) be elected by their fellow students to serve as an officer of any recognized student organization at Harvard. Fraternities could not stand idly by while Harvard restricted the collegiate experience of our members solely because those young men engaged in constitutionally protected activities occurring off campus and on a student's own time.

In the first year of the blacklisting policy, the sororities that inducted Harvard's female students ceased operations, and most of the women's-only finals clubs folded or went coed, as did other student groups like the chorus. Ironically, Harvard's attack was intended to destroy men's-only organizations but its most immediate and most severe impact was to obliterate all non-athletics-based women's-only organizations.

In contrast, most of the fraternities and all-male finals clubs continued to operate. We took steps to shield the identity of our members, and then we launched a legal fight against Harvard, a fight joined by many of the sororities whose chapters full of Harvard women had

been forced to close. Fraternities and sororities spent several million dollars suing Harvard, and we won a decisive victory that took four long years. Harvard abandoned its blacklisting policy but not before an entire generation of Harvard students lost the choice of membership in single-sex organizations that would benefit them.

In a similar fight at Yale shortly thereafter, female students were deliberately recruited to sue fraternities under Connecticut's public accommodation law for denying them membership based on their sex. Again, we won a very expensive multi-year legal fight.

These are expensive wins for an organization operating on student dues and alumni donations. We lack the funds to sue every time our constitutional rights are under attack. For every school where we can muster the legal resources to fight to defend the constitutional rights of our students, there are 5-10 others where we cannot do so.

### ***Time, Place, and Manner Restrictions on Joining a Fraternity***

At the height of the COVID crisis, the NIC was fighting a constant battle with universities nationwide about allowing fraternity activities to continue at schools that were open for in-person classes. For example, Indiana State University announced in the fall of 2020 that fraternities could not hold recruitment events because of COVID. We were not even allowed to hold virtual recruitment events on Zoom because virtual meetings would create friendships where people would want to meet in person. Notably, even as Indiana State was trying to restrict fraternity activities because the pandemic meant that 75-man fraternity chapter meetings were too risky to public health, the university managed to figure out how to allow 125 football players to practice together every day. We fought back and won.

In 2020, Duke barred first-year students from joining fraternities even as they allowed freshman students to join other organizations the day they arrive on campus. Our position is simple: if you are mature enough to sign papers borrowing the cost of attending a \$96,000 per year elite private university, you are ready on day one on campus to decide if joining a fraternity will help you maximize the investment you just made in your future. At Duke, we stood on principle and abandoned our university-owned housing and broke all formal ties with the school so young men could decide to join on their own terms.

In 2022, in the wake of a senseless and tragic student death due to hazing in one fraternity, Virginia Commonwealth University imposed a requirement for students, even transfers, to complete 12 credit hours on campus before they could join any fraternity. In an era where many high school men arrive on campus with enough college credits to graduate in three years or less, there is no reason to impose deferred fraternity membership, and it is

unlawful to restrict the membership practices or penalize student organizations who have not been formally disciplined by the university.

In February 2025, the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV) warned students that they could not associate or socialize – even in small, informal/unscheduled interactions - with members of fraternities and sororities that operated off-campus and without UNLV formal recognition. This is clearly an unconstitutional infringement on the freedom of association rights of students.

### ***Collective Punishment of Fraternity and Sorority Students***

In 2014, a *Rolling Stone* magazine article described an alleged group gang rape at a University of Virginia fraternity, drawing immediate condemnation and extraordinary viral national media attention that upended the lives of every fraternity and sorority student at UVA. The university immediately suspended all fraternities and sororities. 55 days later, the local police confirmed there was no evidence of any crime. *Rolling Stone* famously retracted the story, ultimately paying out millions of dollars in legal judgements for the false claims made in that story. But the damage was already done – the University of Virginia still suspended the activities of thousands of students for several months and, before letting them resume operations, imposed onerous new relationship agreements on groups. In short, thousands of students were collectively punished and forced to agree to new restrictions on their operations for what turned out to be hoax.

After the events at UVA, it became more common for universities to use an allegation of wrongdoing at one fraternity as an excuse to suspend or restrict the operations of all fraternities on campus, and those restrictions also often were extended to the sororities on campus. This is a penalty universities impose nowhere else but Greek life: When a student-athlete is accused of wrongdoing or criminal activity on a campus, the university rarely responds by suspending the activities of the team the athlete is part of, and the school never suspends the activities of all sports teams just because of one accusation versus one athlete on one team. If you don't suspend the baseball team when a football player is arrested for driving drunk, why are 25 other fraternities suspended while an investigation commences against one of those groups? This blatant double standard in university conduct towards students must end.

Unfortunately, these mass suspensions are not ending. In February 2024, the University of Maryland suspended 37 Greek organizations and restricted nearly 3,500 students from related activities because a couple of anonymous misconduct complaints were made against a couple of fraternities. There was no due process for these students, just a halt to their activities in the middle of the semester. **The suspended student organizations were**

**not informed of the charges against them nor provided any evidence to justify the mass suspension.** As part of the suspension, UMD prohibited fraternity and sorority members from speaking to their roommates and classmates who were in fraternities and sororities. **Ignoring all due process, the school forced more than 100 student leaders to submit to intimidating and invasive interviews without allowing them legal counsel and under threat of additional penalties if they failed to cooperate.** Fraternities had no choice but to sue to protect their rights, and those lawsuits led to the university ending its suspension. In fact, those lawsuits led to Maryland ending its time, place, and manner restrictions on joining a fraternity or sorority so that, beginning in the fall of 2026, fraternities and sororities will again be able to recruit first-semester students at the University of Maryland.

The health and safety of our members is everyone's top priority, and we strongly support holding any students and student organizations involved in misconduct accountable for their actions, but **mass suspensions violate the due process rights of our students, chill future reporting of misconduct, and create a culture of mistrust among students and administrators.**

Our partnership with higher education is critical to our success in serving young men who want the fraternity experience, so for too long we were hesitant to stand up for ourselves when schools sought to regulate us out of existence, forcibly indoctrinate us to their own viewpoints on issues, and violate the rights of their own students. But what we have come to realize is that sometimes the schools are the bad partners because their need for control causes them to trample the rights of men who want a single-sex fraternity experience.

### **The House Should Pass the Freedom of Association In Higher Education Act (H.R.2555)**

The NIC has a long history of working with Congress to pass legislation that protects the student experience, enhances student safety, and preserves freedom of association rights. When Congress passed Title IX in 1972, it was fraternity and sorority alumni in Congress who ensured the landmark civil rights law included language that meant schools could still allow the legal operation of single-sex organizations like fraternities and sororities. That landmark language has allowed fraternities and sororities to flourish for decades.

The NIC wants a federal and state legal structure that holds any student accountable for causing physical harm to another student. For years, the NIC worked with a group of heroic parents (Richard and Maille Braham, Danny and Debbie Debrick, Steve and Rae Ann Gruver, Carol King, Liana Kowiak, Evelyn and Jim Piazza, and Kathleen Wiant) who lost sons in fraternity hazing incidents and had started a movement to ensure no one else endured that unbearable pain in the future. Together with those parents, the NPC and the Hazing

Prevention Network, the NIC formed the Anti-Hazing Coalition. The Anti-Hazing Coalition spent years working with this very Committee to pass the Stop Campus Hazing Act, which was signed into law in December 2024. That law is already shining a bright light on misconduct and will lead to a reduction in student harm via hazing. The NIC thanks the Committee for their important leadership on the critical issue of hazing. Now we need to work with this Committee again.

We appreciate that Congress recognizes the value of the single-sex fraternity and sorority experience and the need to protect the freedom of association rights of college students. The NIC has been working with this Committee on freedom of association issues for years and we have done so in a bipartisan way. We are extremely pleased that this Committee has a bipartisan record of supporting freedom of association rights in general and the right to join a single-sex fraternity or sorority in particular.

In 2019, House Education and Workforce Committee member Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and then-Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), both Harvard alumni who were outraged by the school's blacklisting policy, introduced the Collegiate Freedom of Association Act, now called the Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act (FAHE). FAHE's lead sponsors today are former Education and Workforce Committee member Rep. Erin Houchin (R-IN) and Rep. Robert Garcia (D-CA). In the Senate, the current lead sponsors are former House Education and Workforce Committee member Senator Jim Banks (R-IN) and Senator Ruben Gallego (D-AZ).

The Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act would prevent universities from taking adverse actions against students based solely on that student exercising his or her constitutional right to join a single-sex student organization. Schools would be prohibited from imposing membership recruitment restrictions on single-sex organizations unless those same restrictions are imposed on every other recognized student organization. Schools will not be forced to recognize fraternities or sororities, but they will be prohibited from dictating the membership criteria and conditions for single-sex groups. This bill will address all the abuses we mentioned earlier in this testimony.

Nothing in the Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act prevents students from being disciplined for their personal or collective misconduct. If this bill passes, fraternities will still be the most highly regulated organizations on virtually every campus we call home. Students and student organizations will still be held accountable for their misconduct, but the bill will prevent "sentence first, trial later" situations that violate the due process rights of students. Similarly, nothing in the bill allows college fraternities to appear on campuses as unwelcome guests where we have not previously existed.

The members of the NIC have been working hard for years to pass the Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act. In October of 2019, when Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) was Chairman of this Committee, a broad higher education reauthorization bill was passed out of Committee and included the language of the Collegiate Freedom of Association Act, though the broader bill ultimately never came up for a full House vote.

In 2024, this Committee, under the leadership of former Chairman Virginia Foxx (R-NC), passed the Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act as part of a broader package of higher education bills. That package of bills passed the full House in September 2024 but did not move in the Senate. Today, the Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act has a slate of 23 bipartisan sponsors, and we are hopeful that the third time will be the charm. We are asking this Committee to work on a bipartisan basis to bring the Freedom of Association in Higher Education bill to a vote this spring in hopes it can become law before the start of the new school year.

**Higher education is already an expensive proposition for men today, and being forced to sacrifice your freedom of association rights to go to college is a price no student should have to pay to pursue a degree.**

Thank you for the chance to testify here today and I look forward to addressing what questions you have to ensure every student's freedom of association rights are protected.