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COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

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March 27, 2025

Dr. Safa R. Zaki
President
Bowdoin College
600 College Station
Brunswick, ME 04011

Mr. Scott B. Perper
Chair, Board of Trustees
Bowdoin College
600 College Station
Brunswick, ME 04011

Dear Dr. Zaki and Mr. Perper:

College leaders have failed in responding to the national explosion of campus antisemitism following the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel. The Committee on Education and Workforce (the Committee) has significant concerns regarding antisemitism at Bowdoin College and questions regarding Bowdoin's response to antisemitism on its campus, particularly related to its February 2025 encampment (the Encampment).

Bowdoin Students for Justice in Palestine (Bowdoin SJP) organized an illegal encampment inside the college's Smith Union student center from February 6 to February 10, 2025. In a February 6 social media post announcing the Encampment, Bowdoin SJP wrote, "It's time to escalate for Palestine. Long live the Student Intifada."¹ In its February 10th posts, Bowdoin SJP called on students to join them in breaking the law, writing, "Trespass with us," and boasting that numerous students had broken through the college's security perimeter, doubling the Encampment's numbers.² In a campus-wide e-mail, President Zaki acknowledged that the Encampment violated Bowdoin's policies, disrupted campus life, and made community members feel "unwelcome, intimidated, and unsafe."³

¹ Bowdoin Students For Justice in Palestine (@bowdoinsjp), INSTAGRAM (Feb. 6, 2025), https://www.instagram.com/p/DFv9IH8Mkx/?img_index=5

² Bowdoin Students For Justice in Palestine (@bowdoinsjp), INSTAGRAM (Feb. 10, 2025), https://www.instagram.com/p/DF5rtvnxHQ/?img_index=1; Bowdoin Students For Justice in Palestine (@bowdoinsjp), INSTAGRAM (Feb. 10, 2025), https://www.instagram.com/p/DF6JtICR0VD/?img_index=1

³ Miles Berry, *Students inside encampment suspended as Bowdoin College President Zaki aims to bring demonstration to a close*, The Times Record (Feb. 10, 2025), <https://www.pressherald.com/2025/02/10/students-inside-encampment-suspended-as-bowdoin-college-president-zaki-aims-to-bring-demonstration-to-a-close/>

The recent events at Bowdoin are part of an unprecedented wave of campus antisemitism throughout the United States. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) identified at least 1,200 antisemitic incidents on postsecondary campuses between October 7, 2023, and September 24, 2024, representing a 500 percent increase over the same period the previous year.⁴ The ADL also found that 83 percent of Jewish college students have personally experienced or witnessed antisemitism since the October 7th attack.⁵

While Bowdoin has reportedly temporarily suspended eight students and while approximately 50 students are facing discipline for their involvement in the Encampment, it is unclear whether these students will ultimately receive meaningful discipline, particularly given that the Encampment ended following what Bowdoin's Senior Vice President and Dean for Student Affairs Jim Hoppe described as an "understanding" with the Bowdoin administration.⁶

The Committee's October 2024 report, "Antisemitism on College Campuses Exposed," documented how college leaders have failed in their duty to combat antisemitism, including by refusing to enforce their rules and hold violators of their conduct rules accountable, capitulating to the organizers of antisemitic encampments, and lifting disciplinary sanctions under pressure from radical students and faculty. The report found that "[a]t every school investigated by the Committee, the overwhelming majority of students facing disciplinary action for antisemitic harassment or other violations of policy received only minimal discipline."⁷

Postsecondary institutions that receive federal support are responsible for maintaining a safe and uninterrupted learning environment and fulfilling their statutory obligations under Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act* to properly address discrimination and harassment and prevent the creation of a hostile environment. The Committee will not stand by while colleges allow antisemitism to flourish on their campuses.

To understand whether Bowdoin is fulfilling its obligations, please produce the following items **no later than 12:00 p.m. EDT on April 10, 2025:**

⁴ *Over 10,000 Antisemitic Incidents Recorded in the U.S. since Oct. 7, 2023, According to ADL Preliminary Data*, Anti-Defamation League (ADL) (Oct. 6, 2024), <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/over-10000-antisemitic-incidents-recorded-us-oct-7-2023-according-adl>.

⁵ *83% of Jewish College Students Have Experienced or Witnessed Antisemitism Firsthand Since Oct. 7 Attack, Survey Finds*, ADL (Jan. 30, 2025), <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/83-jewish-college-students-have-experienced-or-witnessed-antisemitism>.

⁶ Janet Briggs & Emma Kilbride, *Disciplinary process continues for SJP encampment protesters after reaching "understanding" with the College*, The Bowdoin Orient (Feb. 14, 2025), <https://bowdoinorient.com/2025/02/14/disciplinary-process-continues-for-encampment-protesters-after-reaching-understanding-with-the-college/>.

⁷ REPUBLICAN STAFF REP. OF H. COMM. ON EDUC. AND THE WORKFORCE, 118th CONG., ANTISEMITISM ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES EXPOSED (2024), https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/10.30.24_committee_on_education_and_the_workforce_republican_staff_report_-_antisemitism_on_college_campuses_exposed.pdf.

1. All documents related to the disciplinary action taken against students or faculty involved in the Encampment. Include all documents, including e-mail communication, related to disciplinary action, including but not limited to suspensions, expulsions, and written or verbal reprimands;
2. A detailed description of the understanding reached between Bowdoin and encampment participants which resulted in the Encampment disbanding as well as all related documents. Include all terms and understandings agreed to by Bowdoin and the Encampment participants; and
3. A list of all student disciplinary or conduct cases relating to alleged antisemitic incidents⁸ or any unauthorized encampment since October 7, 2023. Please include the date, a description of the incident, the undergraduate or graduate status and school of the alleged perpetrator, the entity or entities responsible for reviewing the case, the disciplinary process or processes being used to review the case, case status, actions taken by Bowdoin to date (including any modification of proposed or imposed discipline), and the standing of the alleged perpetrator (including good standing, suspended, or expelled). Please also identify all instances in which alleged perpetrators were involved in previous disciplinary incidents.

Congress' oversight powers are derived from the U.S. Constitution and have been repeatedly affirmed by the United States Supreme Court.⁹ Under House Rule X, the Committee has legislative and oversight jurisdiction over "education or labor generally."¹⁰ When producing documents, do not alter them in any way, including but not limited to, the application of redactions or watermarks. Additionally, digital copies should be provided in a format that enables their printing and copying.

⁸ The term antisemitic incidents should be understood to include any incidents involving the targeting of Jews, Judaism, Israel, Israelis, Zionism, or Zionists, or incidents otherwise identified as antisemitic.

⁹ See generally U.S. CONST. art. I, § 8, cl. 8; *McGrain v. Daugherty*, 273 U.S. 135, 174 (1927) (holding that "the power of inquiry—with process to enforce it—is an essential and appropriate auxiliary to the legislative function"); *Eastland v. U.S. Servicemen's Fund*, 421 U.S. 491, 504 (1975) (holding that "the power to investigate is inherent in the power to make laws"); *Barenblatt v. United States*, 360 U.S. 109, 111 (1959) (holding that "the scope of power of inquiry ... is as penetrating and far-reaching as the potential power to enact and appropriate under the Constitution.").

¹⁰ RULES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 119th Cong. at 7 (Jan. 16, 2025), <https://rules.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/rules.house.gov/files/documents/houserules119thupdated.pdf>.

Dr. Zaki and Mr. Perper

March 27, 2025

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Should you have any questions please contact Kent Talbert at kent.talbert@mail.house.gov or 202-225-4527.

Sincerely,



Tim Walberg
Chairman
Committee on Education and Workforce



Burgess Owens
Chairman
Subcommittee on Higher Education and
Workforce Development

Enclosure (Instructions)

CC: The Hon. Linda McMahon, Secretary of Education
The Hon. Pamela Bondi, Attorney General