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November 24, 2025

Dr. Tony Watlington
Superintendent
School District of Philadelphia
440 N Broad St
Philadelphia, PA 19130

Dear Superintendent Watlington:

The Committee on Education and Workforce (the Committee) is investigating antisemitism in Philadelphia public schools, including whether there was or is a hostile environment against Jewish K-12 students and whether the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) is fulfilling its obligation under Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* (Title VI) to end any harassment, eliminate any hostile environment and its effects, and prevent any harassment from recurring. The information gathered will aid the Committee in considering whether legislative changes, including legislation to specifically address antisemitism discrimination, are needed.

The Committee is deeply concerned that SDP is failing to uphold its obligations under Title VI.¹ Since October 7, 2023, the Committee has received allegations that SDP is rife with antisemitic incidents, including allegations of teachers spreading antisemitism in the classroom and SDP approving antisemitic walkouts that isolate Jewish students.² Because of these alleged failures, SDP entered into a federally mandated corrective action plan with the U.S. Department of Education in December 2024; however, according to press and whistleblower reports, antisemitic incidents have continued to proliferate since the plan.³ Jewish parents have likewise claimed that

¹ *ADL Welcomes Resolution of its Complaint Against the School District of Philadelphia for Severe Climate of Antisemitic Bullying and Harassment*, ADL (2024), <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-welcomes-resolution-its-complaint-against-school-district-philadelphia> (last visited Oct 16, 2025).

² *Civil Rights Violations at the School District of Philadelphia*, ADL (2024), <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07/adl-and-sdp-complaint.pdf> (last visited Oct 16, 2025). Alleged incidents include antisemitic graffiti and vandalism including carvings of swastikas, a student dressing as a Hamas terrorist at school and attempting to cover a Jewish student with a Palestinian flag, and a teacher erasing Israel from a list of countries and replacing it with "Palestine." *Id.*

³ See, e.g., *Reported Incidents in Pennsylvania*, STOP HATE IN SCHOOLS (2025), <https://www.stophateinschools.org/view-incidents/pennsylvania> (last visited Oct 17, 2025); Robert Schmad,

their complaints about antisemitism to the school district continue to go unanswered.⁴

Today, SDP employs numerous educators who allegedly promote antisemitic content in their classrooms.⁵ One such teacher has allegedly threatened Jewish parents and students online.⁶ She and other Philadelphia educators also allegedly use lessons from an effort called Teaching Palestine, whose class materials rationalize terrorist violence and advocate for the destruction of Israel.⁷ In addition, SDP employs a senior administrator—its director of social studies curriculum—who has been widely condemned by Jewish advocacy groups in light of his “pattern of denying the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel, refusing to speak about peace or coexistence, and downplaying the lived experiences of Jewish people in the face of violence.”⁸ In a recent example, after the murder of two Israeli embassy workers and the antisemitic firebombing attack in Colorado, the senior administrator wrote, “The groups who align themselves with American savageness should not be surprised when the savageness is turned on you[.]”⁹

In addition to failing to exercise oversight of antisemitic materials in the classroom, SDP’s partnerships with external organizations raise concerns about whether antisemitic ideology is

Philadelphia Students Exposed to Widespread Anti-Israel Bias, WASHINGTON EXAMINER (2025), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/investigations/3278872/philadelphia-students-exposed-widespread-anti-israel-bias/> (last visited Oct 17, 2025). Alleged incidents include continued promotion of antisemitic materials in the classroom and antisemitic bullying.

⁴ Robert Schmad, *Philadelphia Students Exposed to Widespread Anti-Israel Bias*, WASHINGTON EXAMINER (2025), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/investigations/3278872/philadelphia-students-exposed-widespread-anti-israel-bias/> (last visited Oct 17, 2025).

⁵ See, e.g., *Civil Rights Violations at the School District of Philadelphia*, ADL (2024), <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07/adl-and-sdp-complaint.pdf> (last visited Oct 16, 2025).

⁶ *Id.*; see also <https://www.jns.org/philadelphia-teacher-reassigned-offsite-while-public-school-district-investigates-alleged-jew-hatred/>.

⁷ On file with Committee. *Backgrounder: Rethinking Schools’ Teaching Palestine*, NORTH AMERICAN VALUES INSTITUTE (NAVI) (2025), <https://45557309.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/45557309/NAVI%20Resources/Backgrounder:%20Rethinking%20Schools%E2%80%99%20Teaching%20Palestine.pdf> (last visited Oct 17, 2025). See also Robert Schmad, *Nonprofit Network Pushes pro-Palestinian Lessons into Public Schools*, WASHINGTON EXAMINER (2025), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/investigations/3324961/nonprofit-network-pro-palestinian-lessons-public-schools/> (last visited Oct 17, 2025).

⁸ Joanna Volpe, *An Open Letter to Ismael Jimenez and the School District of Philadelphia*, JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA (2025), https://jewishphilly.org/open-letter-ismael-jimenez-and-philadelphia-school-district/?fbclid=IwQ0xDSwLc3c9leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHrGQh93tqO4gR_WqqiMte7OCX1qXA4P2wARpQ5DFcRmr7x_-nWicPMZ8pwOk_aem_5WIZl6lqI7-j0ObCw3sY3w%3B+https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fvide%2FZl0qkpHqlj4%3Fsi (last visited Oct 17, 2025); Ed Post, *#FreedomFriday: Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, and the Middle East*, YOUTUBE (2023), <https://www.youtube.com/live/Zl0qkpHqlj4> (last visited Oct 17, 2025); testimony on file with Committee.

⁹ Debra Flax, *‘Serious problem’ in Philly school district, as Jewish groups wait for response to hate speech*, JNS (Aug. 1, 2025) <https://www.jns.org/serious-problem-in-philly-school-district-as-jewish-groups-wait-for-response-to-hate-speech/>. See also Jewish American Friends & Families Alliance, *The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) has a deep-rooted antisemite problem*, INSTAGRAM (2024), <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DC2tkQqCoSF/?igsh=OWtsNTJvNWdmZDdt> (last visited Oct 17, 2025). The senior administrator also led an SDP professional development series during which Zionists were called “exterminators.” See *Civil Rights Violations at the School District of Philadelphia*, *supra* note 2.

being taught in Philadelphia schools.¹⁰ For example, in August, the Council on American Islamic Relations' (CAIR) Philadelphia chapter announced that it would be partnering with Philadelphia schools.¹¹ CAIR Philadelphia's website promoted a workshop that invoked the antisemitic trope of Jewish "political power," promising to study "the controversial topic if [*sic*] Jewish political power in the U.S."¹² More broadly, the executive director and co-founder of CAIR national has also said that he was "happy to see people breaking the siege" on October 7th, which was the deadliest day for Jewish people since the Holocaust.¹³

Entities that receive federal funds must maintain a safe learning environment and fulfill all obligations under Title VI and its accompanying regulations. This includes the obligation to promptly address discrimination, including harassment that creates a hostile environment, wherever such circumstances may be found to exist. Considering the repeated allegations of antisemitic discrimination across SDP, the Committee is requesting documents to assess SDP's compliance with Title VI and determine whether legislation to specifically address antisemitism discrimination is needed.¹⁴

Accordingly, please provide the below documents by December 8, 2025:

1. An anonymized chart of all complaints received by SDP made against students, faculty, or staff related to potential antisemitic incidents¹⁵ since October 7, 2023. Please include the category of complainant (e.g., student, parent, teacher), the date the complaint was made, a description of the incident including the date(s) it occurred, the entity or entities responsible for reviewing the case, the process or processes being used to review the case, case status, actions taken by SDP to date (including any modification of proposed or imposed discipline), and the standing of the alleged perpetrator.
2. All documents and communications since October 7, 2023, including those referring or relating to walkouts, toolkits, workshops, curricula, course materials, educational material, guest speakers, lecture series, partnerships, teacher training, or professional development, referring or relating to Jews, Judaism, Israel, Palestine, Zionism, or antisemitism, in the possession of SDP schools or offices, including the Office of

¹⁰ See, e.g., Jessica Schwalb, *CAIR-Philadelphia, Whose Leader Blamed Israel for Oct. 7, Announces Partnership with Local Schools to Make Them "More Inclusive"*, WASHINGTON FREE BEACON (2025), <https://freebeacon.com/america/cair-philadelphia-whose-leader-blamed-israel-for-oct-7-announces-partnership-with-local-schools-to-make-them-more-inclusive/> (last visited Oct 17, 2025).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Lindsay Kornick & Fox News, *Philadelphia Schools Partner with Muslim Advocacy Group for More "Inclusive" Education*, FOX NEWS (2025), <https://www.foxnews.com/media/philadelphia-schools-partner-muslim-advocacy-group-more-inclusive-education> (last visited Oct 17, 2025).

¹³ *Id.*; See also Sen. Tom Cotton, *Cotton to Long: Investigate CAIR for Ties to Terrorists: U.S. Senator Cotton of Arkansas*, TOM COTTON SENATOR FOR ARKANSAS (2025), <https://www.cotton.senate.gov/news/press-releases/cotton-to-long-investigate-cair-for-ties-to-terrorists> (last visited Oct 17, 2025).

¹⁴ Testimony on file with Committee; see also *Reported Incidents in Pennsylvania*, STOP HATE IN SCHOOLS (2025), <https://www.stophateinschools.org/view-incidents/pennsylvania> (last visited Oct 17, 2025).

¹⁵ The term "potential 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.

Curriculum and Instruction; the Office of Employee Development; the Office of the Superintendent; the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; the Office of School Climate and Culture; the Office of Strategic Partnerships; the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities; the Office of Family and Community Engagement; the Office of Culture and Community Engagement; or the Chief of School Safety.

3. All documents and communications referring or relating to contracts or agreements involving SDP since January 1, 2022, that refer to Jews, Judaism, Israel, Palestine, Zionism, or antisemitism.
4. All documents, including slides, recordings, notes, and drafts, referring or relating to SDP antidiscrimination trainings, including those on antisemitism, since January 1, 2023.

Congress's oversight powers are derived from the U.S. Constitution and have been repeatedly affirmed by the United States Supreme Court. Under House Rule X, the Committee's legislative and oversight jurisdiction is broad, extending to "education . . . generally" and "laws, programs, and Government activities relating to domestic educational programs and institutions and programs of student assistance within the jurisdiction of other committees."¹⁶ This includes enforcement of Title VI and other antidiscrimination laws by the Department of Education.

Should you have any questions please contact Jenna Berger at jenna.berger@mail.house.gov or 202.225.4527.

Sincerely,



Tim Walberg
Chairman
Committee on Education and Workforce



Ryan Mackenzie
Member of Congress

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