

**Testimony of
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before the

**Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives**

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Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss DePaul's efforts to combat antisemitism and keep our campus safe.

I firmly believe that higher education holds the promise to make a meaningful, collective impact on the world—by developing people of substance who are prepared to address the most urgent and complex questions of our time. More than 30 years ago, I chose to pursue a path in higher education because of that potential.

Today, we are at a critical inflection point. The trust placed in colleges and universities has eroded and is being scrutinized—and rightly so. We must confront the ways in which our institutions have fallen short, and we must do the hard work to change. That includes DePaul, and it includes me and my leadership team. I remain committed to the belief that higher education—especially faith-based institutions like ours—can and will rise to this moment with honesty, accountability, and a renewed sense of purpose.

I have found my time spent in faith-based institutions to be among the most fulfilling. I have served as DePaul's president since August 2022, drawn to the university because of its Catholic, Vincentian mission to educate students to engage the most pressing questions of the day and advance the modern workforce. Prior to DePaul, I was president for 10 years at the University of Indianapolis, which is affiliated with the United Methodist Church. I have also had the privilege of working at two additional Catholic universities, first at LeMoyne College and later at Georgetown University, where I served as dean of the School of Continuing Studies and then associate provost. In addition, I have held administrative roles at New York University and currently serve on the national board of the Cristo Rey Network.

At DePaul, our Catholic, Vincentian mission is rooted in the belief that every human being possesses inherent dignity and worth—a belief that compels us to stand firmly against hate and antisemitism in all its forms. Our approach is shaped by the values of our Catholic tradition and by the example of St. Vincent de Paul, who devoted his life to serving those on the margins of society and building communities of compassion, dialogue, and change.

We take seriously the late Pope Francis's call to reject indifference and work actively for peace. In his words, spoken during a 2019 audience with a Jewish delegation, "a Christian cannot be an anti-Semite; we share the same roots. . . Let antisemitism be banished from the heart and life of

every man and every woman.” His message is clear: antisemitism is incompatible with the teachings of Christ and with the values we uphold in our university community.

This moment demands moral clarity. Antisemitism is not only a threat to Jewish students, faculty, and staff—it is a threat to the very fabric of our American society. As a university president, and as a person of faith, I am personally committed to confronting antisemitism wherever it appears: in our institutions, in our communities, and in ourselves.

I firmly believe that a university must serve as a vital community partner and catalyst for change. We cannot do this work in isolation. We must do it in partnership—across institutions, across sectors, and across political parties. I am committed to working with Congress and the broader government to identify, prevent, and respond to antisemitism. As educators and leaders, we have both a responsibility and an opportunity to foster growth and learning—and our collective response will help define the kind of society we leave to future generations.

At DePaul, we have made mistakes over the last two years—but a lack of moral clarity was not one of them. We understand that the sin of antisemitism must be confronted, repelled, and removed from our community and from our broader society. But we have to move faster. At DePaul, we are resolved to continue enhancing our efforts based on feedback from Congress and others.

As an institution, we have already learned to speak out forcefully and faster and with language that is direct and unambiguous. We recognize that our patience in some instances has been a source of undue pain and fear for our Jewish community members. We have dedicated more resources to campus security and learned to move faster against encampments that undermine the environment necessary for all students to learn. We are also engaging with our faculty to make sure our scholarship and pedagogical approach remain consistent with our Vincentian values and commitment to academic freedom. And we are incredibly focused on campus safety, a particularly difficult challenge in urban campus environments. Two of our students were assaulted, and while one assailant has apparently been apprehended, no student should ever be the victim of violence on campus. We have added resources to foster safety and will continue to do so until all our students feel safe and welcome.

I. DePaul University’s Efforts to Combat Antisemitism Since October 7, 2023

For more than 125 years, DePaul University has welcomed students of every faith tradition into our community. From our founding in 1898, DePaul opened its doors to the children and grandchildren of Jewish and Catholic immigrants at a time when religious quotas limited access to higher education. Today, we continue that legacy as an ecumenical institution rooted in inclusive values, with a campus ministry that reflects our enduring commitment to interfaith understanding and respect.

In the days following the October 7 terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel, we maintained close communication with our community partners—including the Jewish United Fund and Metro Chicago Hillel—as well as with our Jewish faculty, staff, students, and alumni. DePaul’s leadership cosigned a set of guiding principles condemning the actions of Hamas and providing a clear moral framework for how we would lead through this moment and beyond. These principles

became our foundation, reaffirming our unyielding commitment: antisemitism, like all forms of hate, has no place in our community.

Guided by the teachings of the late Pope Francis, we shared his pleas for peace, advocating for nonviolence and compassion. We urged students to engage in thoughtful and peaceful academic events, interfaith gatherings, and religious services that cultivate civic responsibility and spiritual reflection. While encouraging open and constructive dialogue, we also emphasized the necessity of preserving a safe, respectful environment conducive to learning and belonging.

During the encampment protests across the nation in the spring of 2024, we remained in regular contact with our partners at the Jewish United Fund and Metro Chicago Hillel. Throughout this challenging period, we prioritized transparency—informing both the campus and the public about the harmful effects of the encampment on our campus community. We bolstered campus security and appointed a liaison in Student Affairs to ensure Jewish students had a direct channel for support and resources.

We took the encampment seriously and heard the frustration from our community members, many of whom expressed profound concern. On May 16, 2024, with the assistance of the Chicago Police Department, DePaul disassembled the encampment on our campus. In an effort to educate and be transparent, we published a website documenting images and evidence of the discriminatory, harassing, and violent behavior that had occurred. ADL Midwest publicly commended DePaul for transparently presenting this evidence, and the president of the Jewish United Fund praised our response in the Chicago Tribune. While peaceful protest and free expression are protected values at our Catholic, Vincentian university, incitement to violence and hate speech are not.

In the remaining weeks of the 2023-24 academic year, DePaul closed the quad and other campus green spaces to repair the extensive damage. I made it clear that any attempt to breach these areas would result in arrest, suspension, and prosecution. These spaces remained closed until August 2024 to ensure full restoration.

At our Academic Convocation on August 29, 2024, I called on the university to remain grounded in our Catholic, Vincentian mission—affirming the dignity of every person. University leadership reaffirmed our zero-tolerance policy for hatred and violence, and we reiterated our expectations for respectful, constructive engagement as we embarked on the 2024-25 academic year.

On November 6, 2024, I was appalled to learn that two Jewish students, visibly expressing their support for Israel, had been physically attacked in front of the Student Center on the Lincoln Park Campus. That evening, I shared a message with the university community, expressing our outrage and underscoring that for many Jewish students, Israel is a core part of their Jewish identity. Those students—and every student—deserve to feel safe on DePaul’s campus, without exception.

Immediately, our Student Affairs team reached out to the two students to offer care and support. We offered 24-hour safety escorts, access to counseling services, anti-doxing resources, and a personal meeting with me and the provost. I also remained in close personal contact with DePaul Jewish Life, the Jewish United Fund, and Metro Chicago Hillel. Simultaneously, we increased campus security to ensure heightened protection.

The next day, on November 7, 2024, the Chicago Police Department rightly classified the incident as a hate crime at our urging and released a public alert, including descriptions and photos of the offenders. That same day, we shared the alert with the university community, urging anyone with information to come forward. DePaul Public Safety continued to work in close partnership with the Chicago Police Department, providing surveillance footage and all available information to support their investigation.

The Chicago Police Department and the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office arrested a suspect last month who was charged with two counts of a hate crime in connection with the November attack. The suspect is not affiliated with DePaul University. We continue to fully support the ongoing legal process and the investigation.

I have consistently condemned in the strongest possible terms the antisemitic targeting of members of our Jewish community. This hate crime was a direct violation of DePaul’s core values—to uphold and care for the dignity of every individual. The safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff is our highest priority. Our guiding principles leave no ambiguity: acts of antisemitism and violence will never be tolerated at DePaul. No one should ever feel unsafe on our campus.

While we appreciated the numerous messages of support for our response to this incident—from faculty, staff, and members of the broader Jewish community,¹ we also recognize that our work is far from over. Combating antisemitism—like confronting all forms of hate—requires vigilance, humility, and a commitment to continuous learning.

We are listening to our Jewish students, faculty, and staff, and we remain open to feedback on how we can do better with an increased sense of urgency. DePaul is committed to sustained dialogue, robust education, and structural reforms that ensure every Jewish member of our community feels seen, supported, and secure. As we move forward, we do so not only with resolve but with a deep understanding that our values must be reflected in both our policies and our daily actions.

II. Policy Changes, Safety Enhancements, and Action

DePaul also has undertaken a significant review of our policies and procedures on campus in an effort to maintain and enhance campus safety across our urban Chicago campuses. Since the encampment last spring, university leadership has diligently committed to examining existing policies and introducing new ones—from security to student conduct.

¹ Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, president of Yeshiva University, sent a letter on November 7 commending DePaul for its “strong statement condemning the attack on the two Jewish students, showing visible support for Israel. ... Your leading stance against such hatred is important not only because it is the right thing to do, but because other university leaders will look at DePaul University and see that it truly adheres to its mission statement as it ‘compassionately upholds the dignity of all members of its diverse, multi-faith, and inclusive community.’ Through your very visible work to make DePaul University a safe place for Jewish students, your university is a champion for the rights of the Jewish people.”

Our goals are clear: to learn from those who are affected and maintain a secure, welcoming learning environment where every student, faculty member, and staff member can thrive—free from threat or disruption.

Policy Changes

We have implemented multiple policy changes. We regularly communicated these new standards with our university community to ensure compliance and understanding.

Changes to our policies include:

- On August 8, 2024, DePaul University introduced revised Time, Place, and Manner Guidelines to clarify how members of our community may safely and productively engage in demonstrations. These updated guidelines are designed to uphold freedom of expression while ensuring the security, operations, and academic mission of the university are not compromised. They prohibit demonstrations that target individuals or groups with violence or discrimination and require advanced reservations for all demonstrations on university property. Demonstrations may not interfere with university business or academic activities, and there are consequences for violations.
- To further support compliance, signs have been posted across campus—including the Quad— notifying the community that special events, tents, and amplified sound are prohibited without prior approval. These proactive measures are part of our broader strategy to ensure that demonstrations are conducted in a manner consistent with DePaul’s values of safety, civility, and respect.
- A review committee comprised of students, faculty, and staff convened in March 2024 to review the current Code of Student Responsibility and provide recommendations for edits and updates. The committee’s work culminated in updates to various sections, all made in the interest of improving existing processes, increasing transparency, and providing additional clarity regarding student rights and responsibilities. Significant changes included modifying the Disorderly Conduct Policy to better define bullying and harassment, and adding doxing to the list of prohibited behaviors.
- DePaul has also taken steps to address campus safety through the implementation of an Identity Verification Policy. This policy strengthens Public Safety efforts to verify identity for any individual on university property when there is a clear reason to do so. Individuals must present a DePaul ID or other valid photo identification upon request. If identity is obscured, officers are authorized to request the removal of masks, face coverings, or disguises to confirm identity. Officers receive regular policy training to ensure it is administered fairly and consistently and will accommodate individual medical or religious needs. Refusal to comply can result in trespass, removal from campus, or disciplinary action.

Safety Enhancements

In addition to our policies, we have made a number of safety enhancements and investments, including:

- Increased external security spend by 30% to hire more officers for DePaul Public Safety and extended private security contracts with a company that employs off-duty law enforcement;
- Expanded safety escort services by contracting with a private security company to increase our fleet of “Vinny Vans,” which provide free transportation from campus to a residential address within defined boundaries. Public Safety escorts are available to all students on campus from 6 p.m. – 6 a.m. A small group of students, including the two students who were attacked on campus in November, also have access to our 24/7 safety escort service provided by Public Safety;
- Over \$500,000 in lighting upgrades on the Lincoln Park Campus, specifically in the Quad and in our parking garages to deter crime. Lighting makes it more difficult for criminals to operate and improves the visibility of our many security cameras. By installing additional lighting, we eliminated blind spots that came to our attention during the encampment; and
- Installation of new security cameras, upgrading over 200 existing cameras, and integration of security cameras with emergency call towers.

Additionally, I have commissioned an external review of our safety protocols and procedures. This review is examining whether we should maintain our current safety operation of unarmed, unsworn Public Safety officers; move to have a full-fledged police department; or have a hybrid Public Safety department with a mix of unsworn and sworn officers, contracted through a private security company. I expect to have a report with recommendations by the end of this academic year.

Taking Action

Informed by the lessons of the encampment last spring, we are committed to moving swiftly to communicate expectations, enforce university policies, and hold individuals and groups accountable for violations.

- For example, on October 7, 2024, a group attempted to organize a protest without reserving campus space, as required. University officials, in coordination with the Chicago Police Department, quickly informed the group that remaining in the space could result in arrest. The protest was moved, and the organization was sanctioned and remains on probation for the 2024-25 academic year.
- On March 6, 2025, Behind Enemy Lines—an outside group banned from campus and not recognized as a student organization—attempted to organize a protest on university property. DePaul Public Safety and the Chicago Police Department prevented the group from entering university grounds and required them to remain on the public sidewalk.
- Since the original encampment was removed, no new encampments have successfully been organized. This is because of the decisive action taken by the university to tamp down on these disruptive protests.

These examples demonstrate our resolve to enforce policy consistently and protect the integrity of our campus.

Beyond these measures, we also recognize the urgent need to strengthen our sense of community. To create lasting structural change, I have appointed Scott Levin, Esq., former Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League, as Special Advisor to the President on Jewish Engagement. Over the course of the next year, the special advisor will:

- Establish and lead a task force dedicated to combating antisemitism.
- Review DePaul's existing policies to assess whether they sufficiently address hate and antisemitism and are effectively integrated into institutional operations.
- Evaluate DePaul's cultural and structural practices as they relate to combating hate and antisemitism with actionable recommendations for improvement.
- Provide a comprehensive action plan with specific recommendations for policy improvements and community engagement.

In addition, the university has launched a Jewish alumni affinity group to foster deeper connections among graduates and provide ongoing support to our Jewish community. This group will play an important role in building intergenerational bonds, strengthening mentorship opportunities, and amplifying Jewish voices within the broader DePaul network.

To foster a culture of understanding through intentional dialogue and engagement, I established the Dialogue Collaborative at DePaul in August 2024. A cornerstone of the collaborative is the Dialogue in Action certification program, led by DePaul's College of Communication. Through a series of workshops, cohorts of faculty and staff are trained in the principles and facilitation of dialogue across diverse perspectives.

By the end of this academic year, 60 faculty and staff will be certified, each tasked with organizing a campus initiative that incorporates a dialogic approach. These facilitators have already led meaningful conversations. One example is a dialogue held on February 11, 2025, featuring members of the Parents Circle – Families Forum.

The Parents Circle – Families Forum is an organization of over 750 Israeli and Palestinian families whose loved ones have been killed in conflict and who have chosen dialogue and peace. At the event in February, two members of the forum—an Israeli and a Palestinian—shared their powerful journeys with DePaul community members at the St. Vincent de Paul Church. Student leaders also had the opportunity to participate in a training session with the American Friends of the Parents Circle – Families Forum.

Students are also central to the collaborative's mission. Many students are currently engaged in the Bridgebuilding Fellowship, developing skills in interfaith dialogue. On April 24, 2025, these students facilitated small group dialogues during the Yom HaShoah Storytelling event, hosted by DePaul Jewish Life. At that event, staff members also shared family stories of Holocaust survival, creating a deeply reflective and interfaith-centered space for understanding and solidarity.

Our intention is clear: to learn from the past, design meaningful change, and implement systemic changes that eliminate antisemitism at DePaul, affirming our values of safety, belonging, and shared responsibility.

Dedicated Response Team

At DePaul University, our Catholic, Vincentian values compel us to protect the dignity of every person and to foster a community where all students can participate fully—without fear of hatred or discrimination. As part of our continued commitment to this vision, we are in the process of establishing a Bias Education and Response Team (“BERT”), which will serve as a critical point of support and accountability for our campus community.

University leadership is developing BERT—which we expect to be fully active going into the upcoming school year—in response to ongoing dialogue with students, faculty, and staff who expressed a need for clearer pathways to report bias-related incidents and access timely support. BERT will serve both as a responsive structure for addressing harm and as an educational resource committed to long-term cultural change. It reflects our belief that a safe and welcoming environment is essential to academic success.

Students who experience or witness incidents of hate or bias will be able to use an online reporting form to make the university aware of what has occurred. These reports will be routed directly to BERT and the Dean of Students Office. Students can submit reports confidentially or anonymously, understanding that in certain situations, such as those involving immediate safety concerns or potential criminal activity, anonymity may be limited by law. Regardless of the circumstances, DePaul will handle each report in accordance with university privacy policies and comprehensive anti-retaliation protections.

BERT will include representatives from Student Affairs, Mission and Ministry, Academic Affairs, and other university offices as needed. Their charge will be to assess incidents, provide support and resources to affected individuals, coordinate appropriate institutional responses, and identify learning opportunities. BERT will function not only as a response mechanism but as a reflective body—analyzing trends and recommending structural improvements. Its charge will include oversight of antisemitism related to bias and discrimination complaints, with trained individuals who are equipped to assess and respond to such claims.

We recognize that we cannot eliminate all bias from our society. But we can—and must—build a campus culture where students feel safe speaking up, where harm is acknowledged and addressed, and where education leads to transformation. BERT is one more step toward that goal, affirming our shared responsibility to care for one another and uphold the Catholic, Vincentian values that define DePaul University.

III. Values: Vincentian Personalism, Commitment to Building Community, Integrity, Academic Freedom

At DePaul University, our efforts to combat antisemitism are grounded not only in policy but in purpose. Our Catholic, Vincentian identity calls us to uphold the sacred dignity of every individual. We believe that community is not a given—it is something we are called to build, actively and intentionally. Vincentian personalism teaches us to meet one another with compassion and courage, to protect those who are vulnerable, and to stand firmly against all forms of hate. This work is an expression of who we are and who we aspire to be.

The late Pope Francis called on the global Church to embrace a synodal path—one that requires deep listening, humility, and a commitment to journeying together. This model of synodality is especially relevant to Catholic higher education. It invites us to step outside our own experiences, to make space for the voices of others, and to discern our path forward in community. At DePaul, that spirit is foundational to our response to antisemitism. It shapes how we engage, how we lead, and how we care for every member of our community—particularly those who feel unsafe or unseen.

This approach reflects our namesake, St. Vincent de Paul, whose ministry emerged from a belief that faith demands an ethical commitment to serve the marginalized and to transform both Church and society. For St. Vincent, spiritual conviction could not be passive. Our faith must be bold, practical, and creative. He taught that “wisdom consists in following Providence step by step”—a reminder that we are called to respond to the reality before us with integrity and resolve. At DePaul, we take that responsibility seriously. We are committed to asking the Vincentian question: What must be done? We answer that call with action.

Academic freedom is also an integral part of this commitment. Far from being in tension with our religious mission, academic freedom is rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Faith and reason are not opposing forces—they are companions in the search for truth. We believe that knowledge is best pursued through rigorous scholarship, open dialogue, and mutual respect. But we also affirm that academic freedom carries moral responsibility. A truly free university must also be a safe one—where all students, including those who face hatred or bias, can engage fully in the life of the mind without fear for their wellbeing.

St. Louise de Marillac, who partnered with St. Vincent to co-found the Daughters of Charity, once encouraged her community to “live together in great union and cordiality, loving one another in the charity of Our Lord.” Her words offer a powerful vision for university life.

As we confront antisemitism and all forms of hatred, we do so not as a reaction to crisis, but as a faithful expression of our mission. We are called to a love that, in the words of St. Vincent, must be “inventive to infinity.” It is this love—bold, inclusive, and enduring—that compels us to protect, to listen, and to lead.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss our ongoing work to combat antisemitism and ensure our campus is one where all students can thrive. We appreciate the opportunity to be here and the work of your staff. I also welcome any questions that you may have.