

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

"Confronting the Scourge of Antisemitism on Campus"

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 | 10:00 a.m.

Thank you, Chairman Owens, and thank you to the witnesses for your testimonies today.

It has been over a month since Hamas' terrorist attack on innocent civilians in Israel and the start of a brutal, ongoing war in Gaza. This conflict has directly devastated thousands of people—Israelis and Palestinians, alike and countless families and friends across the world and in the United States.

Tragically, but not surprisingly, this conflict has also been marked by a rise in both Antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents on America's colleges and universities.

And to be clear, this discrimination is nothing new. Any student of history knows that it did not start with the current war, foreign influences, or any new philosophy.

My colleagues would do well to recall this country's centuries-long history of racism and antisemitism.

We can all agree that free speech is a constitutional right and bedrock of our democracy, and colleges and universities have been on the front lines of advancing that right for decades.

But we should also be able to agree that schools have a responsibility to protect students' civil rights and safety.

And if they don't want to agree to that, Title VI makes it clear, that they have that responsibility.

Under President Biden's direction, the Department of Education has recently provided additional guidance to colleges and universities on how to uphold their obligation under Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act* and better address antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination on campus.

While the Biden Administration has taken an active role in helping institutions protect students, regrettably, many of my colleagues have spent this Congress fueling divisive and baseless culture wars. Moreover, this week, Congress will consider a government funding bill that includes cuts for the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights—the very agency charged with protecting students from discrimination.

So, today, I hope that my Republican colleagues denounce the culture wars that have distracted us from protecting our vulnerable students. And I hope we can all stand behind the Biden Administration's critical work to ensure that every student and educator has access to a campus free from discrimination, harassment, and violence.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and I yield back.