

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Scott (VA-03)

Full Committee Hearing

Holding Campus Leaders Accountable and Confronting Antisemitism

2175 RHOB

Tuesday, December 5, 2023 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Dr. Foxx. And thank our witnesses for appearing today.

Historically, college campuses have been hubs for students and faculty to foster intellectual thought and expression. Regrettably, following Hamas' October 7th attack on innocent civilians in Israel and the ongoing conflict in Gaza, college campuses have become polarized, and we have been witnessing a disturbing rise in incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia.

To be clear, this discrimination is nothing new on college campuses, indeed nothing new in society generally. Any student of history knows that it did not start with the October 7th attacks; or any one new event; and it didn't start with diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. My colleagues would do well to recall this country has a centuries-long history of racism and white supremacy.

At the same time, free speech is a constitutional right, and the bedrock of our democracy. And colleges and universities are often on the front lines defending this right.

But schools are also responsible for fostering campus environments that promote understanding, respectful dialogue, and, above all else, student safety.

So today, we'll hear from representatives of universities on their efforts to protect students and address discrimination on campus. Of note, this is an opportunity that my Republican colleagues denied us in 2017 when Committee Democrats called for a hearing six years ago on campus discrimination when white supremacists marched through the University of Virginia grounds shouting, "Jews will not replace us!"

We couldn't get a hearing back then.

And while my colleagues claim to be committed to combating discrimination on campus, they are also contradictorily and simultaneously stoking culture wars that can be divisive and discriminatory. Moreover, House Republicans are proposing significant cuts to the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights—the very

office responsible for upholding students' civil rights and investigating discrimination claims.

You can't have it both ways. You can't call for action and then hamstring the agency charged with taking that action to protect students' civil rights.

In stark contrast, the Biden Administration has taken an active role in helping institutions protect students as part of the White House's [National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism](#). Under President Biden's direction, the Department of Education has provided additional guidance to colleges and universities on how to uphold their obligation under Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and better address antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of discrimination on campus. They have also opened investigations into recent incidents on many campuses, including Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Wellesley, University of Pennsylvania, University of Tampa, just to name a few.

In closing, I want to echo my colleague, and I'll quote Senator Schumer again: "All Americans share a responsibility and an obligation to fight back whenever we see the rise of prejudice of any type in our midst."

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

To that end, I yield back.