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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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FEBRUARY COMMISSION BRIEFING

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026

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The Commission convened at 1331
Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest, Suite 1150,
Washington, D.C. 20425 at 10:02 a.m., Rochelle
Garza, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT:

ROCHELLE GARZA, Chair

VICTORIA NOURSE, Vice Chair

J. CHRISTIAN ADAMS, Commissioner

STEPHEN GILCHRIST, Commissioner

MONDAIRE JONES, Commissioner

PETER KIRSANOW, Commissioner

GLENN MAGPANTAY, Commissioner

MARIK XAVIER-BRIER, Acting Staff Director

DAVID GANZ, General Counsel and

Parliamentarian

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- 1 ALSO PRESENT:
- 2
- 3 LISA COATES
- 4 ARCHER BERENSON
- 5 GABRIEL STERN
- 6 MARA RIEGEL
- 7 JONAH CHIZINSKY
- 8 DANA KORNBERG
- 9 NOA FAY
- 10 DAN GRANOT
- 11 LEONARD GOLD
- 12 TEKOA SULTAN-REISLER
- 13 ELIZABETH CULLEN
- 14 AMANDA STULMAN
- 15 SAUL HAKIM
- 16 SABRINA SOFFER
- 17 TAL ZUSSMAN
- 18 MEIRAV SOLOMON
- 19 AMANDA SHANOR
- 20 DAVID RUBINSTEIN
- 21 JESSICA MARGLIN
- 22 SHOSHANA AUFZIEN
- 23 JOEL GORDON
- 24 CADY CARR
- 25 JAKE RYMER

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- 1 TYLER COWARD
- 2 WILLIAM A. JACOBSON
- 3 SUSAN RADOV EPSTEIN
- 4 ELLEN FEIG
- 5 JEFFREY LAX
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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(10:02 a.m.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 1: Good day, and welcome to the February Commission's meeting. Today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Chair Rochelle Garza.

Please go ahead.

CHAIR GARZA: Good morning, everyone. We're going to go ahead and get started. This business meeting of the United States Commission on Civil Rights comes to order at 10:02 a.m. Eastern, on Friday, February 20th, 2026. This meeting is taking place at the Commission's headquarters, located at 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest Washington, DC. I'm the chair of the Commission, Rochelle Garza, and I'd like to start with a roll call. So please confirm your presence when we say your name.

Vice Chair Nourse?

VICE CHAIR NOURSE: Present.

CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Adams?

COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Here.

CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Gilchrist?

COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: I'm present.

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1 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Jones?

2 COMMISSIONER JONES: Present.

3 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Kirsanow?

4 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Here.

5 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Magpantay?

6 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: I'm here.

7 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you. Based on that
8 roll call, we have a quorum of commissioners
9 present. Is the court reporter present? Yes.
10 Indicated in the affirmative.

11 Is the acting deputy staff director
12 present? He has indicated he is present.

13 Is the parliamentarian present?

14 MR. GANZ: I'm here. Yes.

15 CHAIR GARZA: And also indicated he's
16 here. Wonderful. So now we're going to proceed
17 with today's agenda. As posted on the federal
18 register, we will consider the following items:
19 a discussion and vote on the 2025 Briefing
20 Report on Language Access for Individuals with
21 Limited English Proficiency, and on the
22 Commission's Strategic Plan, followed by the
23 Staff Director's Report.

24 Are there any motions to amend the
25 current agenda?

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1 COMMISSIONER JONES: Yes, Madam Chair.

2 CHAIR GARZA: Please state your motion.

3 COMMISSIONER JONES: Madam Chair, I'd
4 like to amend the agenda to include just a very
5 quick discussion as the first item, the issue of
6 subpoenas.

7 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: Second.

8 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. We can proceed to
9 a roll call vote to add that item.

10 Let's start with Vice Chair Nourse.

11 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: Yes.

12 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Adams?

13 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: I'm sorry. I --
14 I'm trying to unmute. This is a point of
15 parliamentary inquiry. This is a motion to
16 amend the agenda, Commissioner Jones, to have a
17 discussion about subpoenas?

18 CHAIR GARZA: That -- that's correct.

19 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Okay. Then I'll
20 vote yes.

21 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Gilchrist?

22 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Abstain on
23 that vote.

24 CHAIR GARZA: Okay.

25 Commissioner Jones?

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1 COMMISSIONER JONES: Yes.

2 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Kirsanow?

3 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Abstain.

4 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Magpantay?

5 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Yes.

6 CHAIR GARZA: And I vote yes. So five

7 yeses, two abstentions. Motion carries.

8 Do you want to proceed with that?

9 COMMISSIONER JONES: Yes, Madam Chair.

10 As the Commission is well aware, in
11 September of last year, we issued a set of
12 discovery requests to the Departments of
13 Education, Health & Human Services, and Justice,
14 respectively. And we, in those discovery
15 requests, included a list of what are called
16 interrogatories, as well as document requests.
17 As I review them, yet again in front of me, they
18 almost exclusively pertain to the academic years
19 2021 through 2025, which is almost entirely
20 during the period of the prior administration
21 and not the current administration.

22 Lest there be any doubt about the non-
23 partisan nature of these requests and the risk
24 of embarrassment to the extent this
25 administration, in refusing to comply with these

1 requests, is concerned about that. And yet, we
2 still have not seen compliance with our
3 discovery requests. I know that the staff has
4 followed up repeatedly. The initial deadline to
5 make a production was in October. Obviously,
6 there was the government shutdown. That
7 deadline was subsequently adjourned to November.

8 There was follow-up in correspondence I
9 saw in January. HHS, for its part, has taken
10 what amounts to, really, a long-standing
11 position over the past year or so, that it's not
12 required to comply at all with anything that
13 this independent agency has requested of it.
14 And so, to some extent, that is consistent. But
15 the Departments of Justice and Education, as we
16 saw yesterday, still have not made this
17 production. There were meandering explanations
18 from panelists yesterday when asked about this.

19 And so I think, ultimately, the way to
20 ensure that this is taken seriously is to issue
21 subpoenas, which hopefully will result in some
22 movement so that we can conduct the full,
23 thorough investigation that Jewish students, and
24 administrators, and staff, and faculty, and
25 their family members are entitled to. And that

1 is our mandate. And obviously, it's also a
2 statutory requirement that the agencies comply
3 with these requests. And so I hate that we're
4 in this position. But as we try to advance the
5 ball and keep our investigation on the right
6 timeline so that we can issue a report in
7 September, I think it's important that we move
8 forward with issuing these subpoenas. And so
9 that is my motion.

10 My motion, Madam Chair, is that the
11 Commission issue subpoenas to the Departments of
12 Justice, Health & Human Services, and Education,
13 containing these discovery requests that were
14 initially sent in September of 2025.

15 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Madam Chair,
16 Christian Adams, please.

17 CHAIR GARZA: You're recognized.

18 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Commissioner
19 Jones, I have a whole bunch of gentle questions
20 for you about the original motion, or to amend
21 the agenda to have a discussion. You have now
22 made a secondary motion that is proper, I
23 believe, in a motion to again change the agenda.

24 So there's a bit of a parliamentary tangle. I
25 would ask if you'd consider withdrawing for now

1 so I can ask some gentle questions about the
2 original discussion --

3 COMMISSIONER JONES: So --

4 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: -- where I'll
5 amend your motion.

6 COMMISSIONER JONES: Yeah. So two
7 points on that. First, I would be -- I would be
8 happy to withdraw my motion so that we can have
9 a colloquy. However, I maintain that it is a
10 proper motion, because the item that is now
11 added to the agenda and that we are currently
12 going through is a discussion of subpoenas. So
13 it is a -- it is a germane motion. But for
14 purposes of having a conversation with you,
15 Commissioner, I will withdraw that motion for
16 the time being.

17 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Okay. May I
18 continue with my questions? Can --

19 CHAIR GARZA: Go ahead, Commissioner
20 Adams.

21 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Okay. So
22 Commissioner Jones, can -- you said that some
23 staff have followed up. You must be privy to
24 information that, at least I, and I suspect
25 other members of our caucus are not privy to.

1 Could we catalog who followed up? What did they
2 ask? Who did they talk to? And even better,
3 can they, like, sit in that big long table with
4 microphones in front of us, and update us what
5 the status is? Or do we simply operate in the
6 fog as to what the state of affairs are?

7 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. So Staff Director,
8 would you -- thank you.

9 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Hi. Good morning,
10 Commissioners.

11 So in terms of Commissioner Adams, the
12 response to your question. So OCRE has been
13 working very closely with both co-leads, so
14 Carissa and Irena, trying to get responses from
15 DOJ, ED, and HHS. So the interrogatories were
16 sent out in September, initially, by our Office
17 of General Counsel. And then after the
18 government shutdown, we followed up again with
19 them in November. Didn't get any response, but
20 we had sent the different emails. And I'm happy
21 to have those names. But it was -- the initial
22 ones were to Craig Trainor at ED, Harmeet at
23 DOJ, and I think it was director --

24 Thank you, Commissioner.

25 -- director Paula Stannard over at HHS.

1 And so we followed up with the same -- with the
2 same individuals in the November. And then
3 also, we sent another letter, very similar to
4 the ones that Mauro would send trying to
5 escalate it back in January, as well.

6 CHAIR GARZA: This also included
7 documentary requests, correct?

8 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: That's correct.
9 Yes.

10 CHAIR GARZA: And as well as
11 interrogatories?

12 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: That is correct.

13 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Okay, Christian
14 Adams, please. Hand up.

15 CHAIR GARZA: Go ahead, Christian.

16 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Was -- when you
17 said, we followed up in November, what does that
18 mean? You picked up the phone? You walked to
19 900 Pennsylvania?

20 What does follow up mean?

21 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: So in November,
22 post-shutdown, we sent follow-up emails to them,
23 to each of the agencies, reaching out, yet
24 again, making sure that they had received. So
25 we had -- back in September, we had gotten

1 confirmation from the Department of Education
2 that they were in receipt of them. And so then,
3 back in November, we followed up yet again in an
4 email. And then sent a letter -- a formal
5 letter in January.

6 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: So that means no
7 phone call, right? I just want to make sure
8 that wasn't part of the follow-up.

9 CHAIR GARZA: I --

10 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: There are no phone
11 numbers for anybody at --

12 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: I -- so there isn't
13 a phone number that we would be able to reach
14 the individuals that we were contacting.

15 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Jones,
16 you're recognized.

17 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Madam Chair --

18 COMMISSIONER JONES: Thank --

19 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: -- Christian
20 Adams.

21 CHAIR GARZA: One second.

22 COMMISSIONER JONES: Commissioner
23 Adams, I --

24 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: I have a motion.

25 COMMISSIONER JONES: No. Commissioner

1 Adams, I think the Chair just recognized me. So
2 to --

3 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: All right.

4 COMMISSIONER JONES: -- to -- lest
5 there be any confusion or attempted confusion,
6 for purposes of the record yesterday, it was
7 very clear from Craig Trainor, for example, that
8 he was aware of these document requests and
9 interrogatories but did not have a good
10 explanation as to why those discovery requests
11 had not been complied with. So there is no
12 possibility that these departments are unaware
13 of these discovery requests.

14 And certainly, Commissioner Adams, you
15 yourself have been aware of them. And so to the
16 extent you've been, you know, along with others,
17 having conversations with this administration,
18 that would also have been opportunities. But
19 separate and apart from that, it is very clear
20 through the written correspondence, through the
21 testimony yesterday, that these departments are
22 aware of these discovery requests. And so the
23 next, you know, plausible thing to do would be
24 to escalate this so that we can continue the
25 important work that we started.

1 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Madam Chair,
2 Motion to Amend?

3 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: Amend what? Amend
4 what?

5 CHAIR GARZA: I'm sorry. Amend?

6 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: The motion that
7 Mr. -- Commissioner Jones has out on the table
8 now.

9 CHAIR GARZA: There's --

10 COMMISSIONER JONES: I withdrew the
11 motion.

12 CHAIR GARZA: He withdrew the motion,
13 Commissioner Adams.

14 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Oh, I see. Okay.

15 CHAIR GARZA: Yeah. Commissioner --

16 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Madam Chair?

17 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: We're still in
18 discussion on the agenda change?

19 CHAIR GARZA: No. We approved the
20 agenda change.

21 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: So we're in
22 discussion on the subpoenas?

23 CHAIR GARZA: We're in discussion of
24 the item. We're within the item on the
25 discussion of subpoenas. Yes.

1 Commissioner Gilchrist is indicating
2 he'd like to be recognized, so --

3 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Thank you,
4 Madam Chair. The question is directed to the
5 acting staff director. You mentioned -- I think
6 you mentioned that you followed a similar
7 process as your predecessor; is that right?

8 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: That is correct.

9 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: That process,
10 from your experience, included an escalation.
11 Can you describe that to me a little bit more?

12 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Yeah. Sure. So our
13 process for sending interrogatories, we work
14 with -- so OCRE works with the commissioners and
15 the special assistants to draft the questions.
16 And as well as our office of general counsel,
17 our general counsel then sends out the
18 interrogatories and document requests with the
19 -- to the different agencies. So we try and get
20 the agencies to comply and respond to our
21 comments, our requests. And then if they don't,
22 what we would oftentimes do is let the
23 commissioners know and then ask our staff
24 director, Mauro Morales, to send a letter on
25 letterhead saying, you know, this is our

1 statutory enforcement report. We have a
2 statutory mandate, so please send those. And so
3 following in the predecessors -- in my
4 predecessors past behavior, I did the same.

5 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Sure. No.
6 Thank you for that.

7 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Sure.

8 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Do you recall
9 whether or not that escalation ever included
10 requests for subpoenas?

11 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Not -- so since --
12 I've been here since 2017, the Commission has
13 not issued a subpoena.

14 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Okay. So you
15 have not?

16 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: I'm not aware of it.
17 No.

18 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Okay.

19 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: If it were
20 requested.

21 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: All right.

22 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Yeah.

23 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Thank you.

24 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Uh-huh.

25 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Kirsanow,

1 and then I'll recognize Commissioner Jones.

2 MR. GANZ: If I could add something?

3 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: General Counsel
4 needs to --

5 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Sure.
6 Absolutely.

7 CHAIR GARZA: General Counsel, you're
8 recognized.

9 MR. GANZ: Mr. Gilchrist, generally the
10 -- there wouldn't be a request for subpoenas
11 from the staff director or from staff. It would
12 be -- that's generally something --

13 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Could he get on a
14 microphone? He can't be heard.

15 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Can you go
16 over there for me?

17 MR. GANZ: Sure. Yeah. I don't think
18 (inaudible) --

19 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: And let me be
20 clear about my -- what I was asking the staff --
21 acting staff director. I was asking him, was he
22 aware if there had ever been a subpoena
23 submitted? So --

24 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. We're going to --

25 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Now, Mr.

1 General Counsel, I have a question for you, too.

2 CHAIR GARZA: Yeah. General Counsel is
3 going to answer that question. Go ahead and --

4 MR. GANZ: Thank you. So in the past,
5 there hasn't been a subpoena issued since, I
6 believe, 2010. But the subpoena process here is
7 that the commissioners vote on it, and then it
8 goes out under the signature of the chair of the
9 commission. So it's not something that Mauro or
10 an acting deputy staff director would issue.

11 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Thank you so
12 much for that comment. So you are aware that
13 the last subpoena request was in 2010; is that
14 right?

15 MR. GANZ: Yeah. I mean, that's just
16 based on a review of our kind of chronological
17 files, and our -- you know --

18 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: And that was a
19 vote of this Commission on -- in 2010?

20 MR. GANZ: It -- approximately 2009,
21 2010. That was the last time the Commission
22 issued subpoenas.

23 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: It was February
24 8th.

25 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Okay. All

1 right. Thank you.

2 CHAIR GARZA: And just a quick
3 question, General Counsel. You sent out an
4 email to all commissioners regarding this
5 process and the history of it; is that correct?

6 MR. GANZ: Yeah. Back in February of
7 last year, so 2025, I sent a memo around
8 regarding -- around the subpoena kind of process
9 and the statutory and regulatory requirements.
10 Whether that included a reference to the last
11 time we issued a subpoena, I'm not entirely
12 sure. I need to -- I need to double check.

13 CHAIR GARZA: You need to go back and
14 look?

15 MR. GANZ: Yeah. But -- yeah. I --
16 I'm fairly certain on that fact, that the last
17 time the agency or Commission issued a subpoena
18 was approximately 16 years ago.

19 CHAIR GARZA: Yeah. And you -- and I
20 recall you sending that. And it was a -- you
21 know, we keep kind of running into these issues
22 and having difficulty in getting responses. And
23 so obviously, it's our role as a Commission to
24 have -- well, we are here to investigate civil
25 rights issues and the federal response to such

1 issues. This is part of our job, this is part
2 of our mandate. And, you know, my position is,
3 you know, issuing a subpoena is not an
4 extraordinary thing for us to do. I think it is
5 in full compliance with what our mandate is as a
6 commission.

7 I believe -- I know you want to be
8 recognized, but Commissioner Kirsanow --

9 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Thank you very
10 much.

11 CHAIR GARZA: -- would you like to be
12 recognized?

13 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Yeah. A couple
14 of things. Number one is, just for the record,
15 my recollection is is that Mr. Trainor said that
16 he is not aware of having received any requests
17 or subpoenas. That was what he said yesterday.

18 I don't think he refused or anything like that.

19 I think he said he was not aware of receiving
20 anything like that. And, well, I'll just leave
21 it at that. I'll leave it at that.

22 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Jones?

23 COMMISSIONER JONES: So a few -- a few
24 observations. The fact that the last time that
25 subpoenas were issued were under President

1 Obama, I think speaks to the non-partisan nature
2 of this. I -- I'm -- frankly, I'm surprised,
3 especially given that most of this data is from
4 the prior administration, at the non-compliance.

5 And my, you know, clear recollection yesterday
6 from -- starting with Mr. Trainor, because there
7 was also Mr. -- Mr. Dolan who, I think, was --
8 his response was wholly unacceptable in
9 preparation for yesterday's presentation that he
10 was not made aware of the issuance of these
11 discovery requests, was beyond the pale, in my
12 opinion.

13 And -- but going back to Mr. Trainor.
14 He had a meandering set of responses. And I was
15 able to elicit from him that ultimately, he
16 cannot recall whether he received the discovery
17 request. But certainly, he didn't dispute that
18 there is a process at the Department of
19 Education where he was at the time that these
20 discovery requests were issued, and where he
21 remained for several months after they were
22 issued, including through the period of the
23 original deadlines to intake, to evaluate, and
24 to respond. And to respond. And, in fact,
25 there has been a response from HHS, as I

1 mentioned earlier, that they are not going to
2 comply. So there's no risk.

3 So Madam Chair, I'd like to move at
4 this time for this Commission to issue
5 subpoenas.

6 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: I second the
7 motion.

8 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: Madam Chair --

9 CHAIR GARZA: We have --

10 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: -- discussion?

11 COMMISSIONER JONES: No.

12 CHAIR GARZA: We have a -- we have a
13 live motion?

14 COMMISSIONER JONES: Yeah.

15 CHAIR GARZA: That --

16 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Could you
17 repeat the motion, please?

18 CHAIR GARZA: The motion is to issue
19 the subpoenas --

20 COMMISSIONER JONES: The -- yeah.

21 CHAIR GARZA: -- the -- as submitted to
22 commissioners this -- earlier this week. To
23 vote on issuing the subpoenas.

24 COMMISSIONER JONES: To issue
25 subpoenas.

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1 CHAIR GARZA: That's it.

2 COMMISSIONER JONES: The motion is to
3 issue the subpoenas.

4 CHAIR GARZA: And it's been properly
5 moved and seconded.

6 COMMISSIONER JONES: All right. Let's
7 have a roll call vote.

8 CHAIR GARZA: So.

9 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Madam Chair,
10 for purposes of the record, I am leaving the
11 meeting right now.

12 COMMISSIONER JONES: Let's have a roll
13 call vote on that --

14 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. I'm going to go
15 into a roll call vote. Commissioner -- Vice
16 Chair Nourse?

17 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER JONES: Are you going to
19 --

20 CHAIR GARZA: I mean, Commissioner
21 Adams?

22 MR. GANZ: This is the general counsel.
23 It might be proper to ask Commissioner Adams if
24 he's still --

25 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Adams, are

1 you still on the phone? Okay. It appears that
2 Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Gilchrist, and
3 Commissioner Kirsanow have walked out of our
4 meeting. I believe that that means we no longer
5 have a quorum. But I'm going to ask General
6 Counsel to opine on that, since we established
7 quorum at the beginning of the meeting.

8 MR. GANZ: Yeah. This is an issue I've
9 looked into in anticipation of today. It's --
10 I'll note that it has been the past practice --
11 I pulled some meeting transcripts from prior
12 commission meetings where quorum was lost, where
13 folks did walk out of the meeting, or left the
14 meeting and quorum was lost. It was concluded
15 by that commission that grouping, that quorum
16 was lost. And it -- I think it's also
17 consistent with our statute. There's not
18 anything explicit in our statute, but my
19 conclusion is that without, you know, any
20 binding case law or anything directly on point,
21 that it is likely that quorum has been lost.
22 When there's no longer -- our statute 42 USC
23 1975 (a) requires five members be --

24 CHAIR GARZA: Be present.

25 MR. GANZ: -- for a quorum to be -- the

1 quorum requirement is five members. So I think
2 it's a very reasonable interpretation to say
3 that quorum can be lost and has been lost.

4 CHAIR GARZA: Is Commissioner Adams
5 still on the call? Yes. Commissioner Adams is
6 still on the phone, so we have established a
7 quorum?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: Okay. Let's
9 continue with roll call.

10 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. Let's go ahead and
11 continue, then. The tech team is confirming
12 that Commissioner Adams is still on the phone.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: We can move to
14 the next person. So they can complete the roll
15 call.

16 CHAIR GARZA: So Commissioner Adams
17 abstains. Commissioner Jones?

18 COMMISSIONER JONES: Yes.

19 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Magpantay?

20 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Yes.

21 CHAIR GARZA: And I vote yes. You can
22 abstain. Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER JONES: I don't think it
24 -- I don't think it's recorded either way as an
25 abstention. Doesn't abstention --

1 CHAIR GARZA: I don't know.

2 Commissioner Adams? Can we get him on
3 the -- can I have a point of order here? If
4 Commissioner Adams is still present on the call,
5 but not voting?

6 MR. GANZ: I mean --

7 COMMISSIONER JONES: Either way, the
8 motion carries. I --

9 MR. GANZ: It's -- okay. There's a
10 question of fact. I'm not really sure it's a
11 legal issue. But, you know, he's obviously on
12 -- he's not present. He's on --

13 COMMISSIONER JONES: Yeah.

14 MR. GANZ: He's on -- he's here, you
15 know, telephonically. So --

16 COMMISSIONER JONES: Sounds like the
17 chair has established the presence of
18 Commissioner Adams and that the motion has
19 carried. So.

20 CHAIR GARZA: I just want to make sure
21 we're crossing our T's and dotting our I's. Can
22 you go ahead and check back there, General
23 Counsel, and confirm? Before I rule on this
24 motion.

25 MR. GANZ: The tech is saying that he's

1 still present on the call, which establishes his
2 presence.

3 CHAIR GARZA: Can you go back there?
4 Can you just check?

5 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: Yeah. Someone
6 needs to check here.

7 MR. GANZ: For the purpose of the court
8 reporter's transcript, I'm going to go ahead and
9 look at the --

10 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. It -- okay. So it
11 appears that Commissioner Adams was
12 participating in our meeting at the time that we
13 took this vote. It appears that the motion
14 passes. But I do want a report from General
15 Counsel just to ensure that this is correct and
16 that we're doing everything correctly. But from
17 what I am being told, Commissioner Adams was
18 present on the line. He had already established
19 quorum. He, as we were voting, was still on the
20 phone. And it appears that the motion has
21 passed at that this point.

22 So let's get an opinion from General
23 Counsel just to confirm. Because, of course, I
24 want to do this above board and correctly,
25 right? Go ahead.

UNEDITED

1 COMMISSIONER JONES: So parliamentary
2 inquiry. What specifically are we asking of the
3 general counsel?

4 CHAIR GARZA: To ensure that we -- that
5 this vote is proper, right? That we properly
6 executed this vote and -- under the quorum
7 conditions that are required.

8 COMMISSIONER JONES: Okay.

9 CHAIR GARZA: Okay? All right. Well,
10 I believe that ends this meeting. I -- since we
11 no longer have quorum, he is no longer on the
12 line, there are only four commissioners here, so
13 we cannot proceed with our regular business
14 meeting. We'll be back at 12:00 p.m. for a
15 public hearing on our antisemitism
16 investigation. I'm going to end the meeting at
17 10:30 a.m. Eastern time.

18 All right. Good afternoon, everyone.
19 This public comment session of the United States
20 Commission on Civil Rights comes to order at
21 12:06 p.m. Eastern Time on February 20th, 2026.

22 It takes place at our headquarters at 1331
23 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest, Suite 1150,
24 Washington, DC 20425. I am chair of the
25 commission, Rochelle Garza. And joining me

1 today are Vice Chair Nourse, Commissioner
2 Gilchrist, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner
3 Kirsanow, and I believe Commissioner Adams and
4 Commissioner Magpantay will be on the phone at
5 some point later today.

6 Today's session is for public comment
7 only. Commissioners are not going to engage in
8 discussion or ask questions. We are here to
9 receive testimony for the record. The -- this
10 listening session is part of our commission's
11 ongoing examination on -- of antisemitism on
12 America's college campuses and universities.
13 And it follows our briefing from yesterday.
14 Today, we will hear directly from students,
15 faculty members, legal scholars, campus
16 advocates, civil rights organizations, and
17 members of the public. These perspectives will
18 inform the Commission's investigation of
19 antisemitism on college campuses and university
20 campuses, as well as how institutions and
21 federal agencies are responding. We are here to
22 gather your thoughts, experiences, and
23 perspectives. And commissioners, again, will
24 not be asking questions or engaging in
25 discussion during this session. Instead, we are

1 here just solely to listen so your voices can be
2 heard.

3 This session is being recorded. And a
4 few housekeeping matters. Each speaker will
5 have three minutes, so I'll provide a 30-second
6 warning. When your time expires, we'll move
7 immediately to the next speaker. So before you
8 start your testimony, please state your name
9 clearly, your full name, and your affiliation or
10 organization for the record. And if you have
11 any additional comments later, or if you did not
12 get to finish all of your testimony, you can
13 submit written testimony to asbriefing@usccr.gov
14 by March 20th of this year.

15 We're going to now begin with our first
16 speaker. I believe, Lisa Makover Coates?

17 MS. MAKOVER COATES: Makover.

18 CHAIR GARZA: Makover Coates. Okay.
19 Please begin.

20 MS. MAKOVER COATES: Hi. My name is
21 Lisa Makover Coates. I'm Esti to my friends and
22 colleagues. I'm a vice dean and executive
23 director at the Wurzweiler School of Social Work
24 at Yeshiva University in New York City. I'm
25 also a Ph.D. candidate whose dissertation is

1 titled, "Reckoning with Antisemitism, Social
2 Work Educators' Perspectives."

3 I want to take you back to a lecture
4 hall at a large public university in the early
5 1990s. A young woman from New Jersey, someone
6 who grew up with Rosh Hashanah as a day off from
7 public school, hears her professor announce the
8 date of a next exam. He has it scheduled on
9 Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year. She raises
10 her hand, she stands up, and she points out the
11 conflict. He offers a make-up exam. Amazing.
12 Everybody is thrilled. And on the makes the
13 makeup exam on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

14 So it wasn't so great. He -- when the student
15 explains to the professor that the Jewish
16 students are not going to be able to take the
17 test on the make-up exam, he says, figure it out
18 or take the F. The student goes to the
19 department chair who sides with the professor.
20 Then she goes to the dean, and the exam is
21 finally moved. The student was me, 40 years
22 ago. I now serve today at an institution rooted
23 in tikkun olam, the Jewish value of repairing
24 the world.

25 That mission has brought me to the

1 research I began two years prior to 10/7. As I
2 started my dissertation, antisemitism was
3 already gaining speed. It was being promoted on
4 college campuses across America. And after
5 10/7, antisemitism has really become
6 commonplace. My preliminary research findings
7 reveal a troubling gap. With 93 percent of
8 social work educators believing that
9 antisemitism should be taught in these programs,
10 it is not consistently in the curriculum.

11 Moreover, 50 percent have never
12 received training on the topic of antisemitism.

13 We cannot expect educators to teach what they
14 have never been taught. And we cannot expect
15 Jewish students to be protected by professionals
16 who cannot recognize the threat. To assist
17 social work education -- educators in expanding
18 their knowledge, in December 2025, the Council
19 on Social Work Education published Understanding
20 Antisemitism: A Teaching Guide for Social Work
21 Education. It's a concrete step to fill the
22 knowledge gap that -- the same gaps that my
23 research has identified.

24 When antisemitism goes unrecognized,
25 incidences go unreported and unaddressed, the

1 federal government cannot enforce civil rights
2 protections that people on the ground are not
3 equipped to identify. Social work educators
4 work alongside students on these campuses every
5 day and my research suggests that some are
6 amongst those who are not yet properly equipped.

7 That is a real gap with real consequences.

8 I want to close with a personal note of
9 gratitude to Mr. Joe Kim, who graciously
10 accommodated my request to be the first speaker.

11 I need to make it home to New Jersey by 5:18
12 p.m. for the Sabbath with my family. I want to
13 quickly say that it reminded me that sometimes
14 you have to realize that for -- to -- for me to
15 be here on a Friday session, it created a
16 barrier for any Sabbath observant person who
17 wanted to be in person to have a conversation
18 about antisemitism. Sometimes it's not about
19 intention. It's about knowledge.

20 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you. No, I -- you
21 went a little bit over, but it's okay.

22 All right. Next speaker.

23 MR. BERENSON: Good afternoon,
24 commissioners. My name is Archer Berenson and I
25 am the civic engagement and public policy

1 director at George Washington University's
2 Chapter of Jewish on Campus.

3 I want to start by expressing first, my
4 sincere gratitude for the fact that this panel
5 has even convened and that these testimonies are
6 even being heard. You are all doing a
7 tremendous service to Jewish college students
8 just with your presence and attention to this
9 matter. I thank you.

10 So I grew up in a Jewish bubble in Los
11 Angeles, California. Until I left for college,
12 it was surprising for me to find out that
13 somebody that I met was not Jewish. So you have
14 to understand, I was never othered for being
15 Jewish during my childhood. So you can imagine
16 then how I arrived at the belief that
17 antisemitism was essentially a relic of the
18 past, basically, just a malignancy consigned to
19 history and that after the Holocaust, it was
20 essentially extinguished.

21 Now, being in my second semester of my
22 junior year of college, I know that I was sorely
23 mistaken. Virulent atavistic antisemitism on
24 GW's campus is not rare, not abstract, and not
25 confined to the margins. Among the students an

1 acquaintance of mine got wind that I was Jewish
2 and told my peers not to spend time with me
3 because I'm a Zionist, as if that's a bad thing
4 to be.

5 Among the professors, a serious scholar
6 of anthropology said in a human rights class
7 that I took last semester, that quote, " Hamas is
8 a creation of Israel." A statement that crosses
9 the line from legitimate political critique into
10 conspiratorial aspersion. Among the
11 administration claims of antisemitism are not
12 taken seriously. Students regularly use Hamas
13 symbols and chant shocking, libelous slogans
14 about the State of Israel. Individual
15 accountability for these students is exceedingly
16 rare.

17 Even though I have certainly
18 experienced my fair share, my personal
19 experiences with antisemitism are dwarfed by
20 comparison to those of some of my peers. No
21 Jewish student is insulated from it. This is
22 what we've come to expect at GW and have been
23 dealing with for some time. Just to be clear,
24 the issue of Israel is intimately connected with
25 on-campus antisemitism. People who hold

1 prejudice against Jews use the State of Israel's
2 actions, which have left a lot to be desired, to
3 be sure, as a pretext through which to launder
4 and legitimize their antisemitism. Israel and
5 antisemitism on college campuses cannot be
6 separated.

7 To conclude, I would be remiss not to
8 acknowledge that among Jews of conscience at the
9 university level, there is a profound unease at
10 the prospect that antisemitism will be
11 instrumentalized as a political tool to suppress
12 students legitimately exercising their First
13 Amendment rights. Any response to antisemitism
14 that erodes students' rights ultimately
15 undermines the pluralistic principles that
16 protect minorities, including Jews, in the first
17 place.

18 I sincerely hope that none of the
19 testimony you've heard today and yesterday will
20 be invoked by anyone to justify cynical
21 overreach, indiscriminate restrictions on lawful
22 protest, or any effort to conflate legitimate
23 political dissent with bigotry. As I mentioned
24 before, I am deeply grateful for the privilege
25 of testifying about what's occurred on GW's

1 campus. Thank you.

2 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.

3 Next speaker.

4 MR. STERN: Good afternoon. My name is
5 Gabriel Stern. I'm a junior economics major at
6 the University of Maryland. In the months after
7 October 7th, 2023, when Hamas terrorists
8 invaded, captured, and murdered over 1,200
9 innocent Israelis, the Student Government
10 Association at the University of Maryland
11 brought a bill into the legislature that called
12 for the university to divest from assets or
13 companies that were based in or supported the
14 State of Israel. The bill was defeated in two
15 consecutive semesters, thanks to tireless
16 efforts from student leaders and the entire
17 Jewish community.

18 Each time the bill came up, there was a
19 sharp uptick in antisemitic messages on campus
20 social media and message boards. Last fall,
21 after a blacklist caused Jewish students to be
22 uniformly voted out of the student government,
23 the bill was brought up again, but we were ready
24 to fight it again. However, the vote was
25 scheduled for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement,

1 the holiest day in the Jewish calendar,
2 effectively silencing Jewish voices who wished
3 to attend the meeting and oppose the bill. So
4 after two years, the bill finally passed.

5 Now, I value and respect the student
6 government's power to act independently and the
7 legitimacy of the votes that they fairly hold.
8 The issue I have is one of representation. It
9 is outrageous and unconscionable that they would
10 choose to hold this vote on a day that they knew
11 would structurally exclude such a large part of
12 the student body, especially students who are
13 directly affected by the outcome of the bill.

14 No rules were broken, nor do I expect
15 or deserve any special treatment as a Jewish
16 student. I do believe that it's the obligation
17 of a representative body to give equal voice to
18 all students. How can a student government be
19 said to represent us when they deliberately
20 alienate over 5,000 Jewish students? The
21 University of Maryland is known for its vibrant
22 Jewish community and Jews have long been
23 involved in all parts of campus life. The
24 severance of this relationship between the
25 broader campus and Jewish communities is

1 concerning and risks evolving into a more
2 explicit attack on Jewish students.

3 Campus Life may keep pushing us away,
4 but we are not going anywhere. Jewish students
5 will continue working towards a better
6 relationship with the rest of the student body
7 and the university. We just want somebody to
8 come to the table with us. Thank you.

9 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.

10 Next speaker.

11 MS. RIEGEL: Good afternoon,
12 commissioners. My name is Mara Riegel. I'm a
13 sophomore at the George Washington University,
14 the director of advocacy for our chapter of
15 Jewish on Campus, and I'm a practicing Jew.

16 I would like to begin by telling you
17 what life on campus can be like as a Jewish
18 student. I walk around my school's grounds on
19 eggshells. I am hyper aware of the Hebrew word
20 that hangs around my neck and I am worried that
21 the wrong person will see it, but I'm unable to
22 bear the pain that comes with removing it.

23 I sit in my classes waiting for the day
24 that I will learn that either my peers, my
25 professor, or both, hold hatred toward Jews or

1 our homeland regardless of political
2 affiliation. Usually, that wait does not take
3 long to find out that they also hate me, too.

4 I walk home at the end of my days to
5 see posters against antisemitism, which should
6 not be controversial, vandalized and torn down.

7 I am aware of my surroundings every second of
8 every day I am at school because I know that I
9 cannot be my full Jewish self in front of a not
10 small portion of my peers and my teachers.

11 When there are protests and events on
12 campus, it gets worse. I am singled out and I
13 am berated by those who see me and my existence
14 as a threat to people over whom I hold no power.

15 I am singled out and berated by people who call
16 me names like ugly Zionist. I am told I don't
17 belong. I'm physically obstructed and impeded
18 from exercising my full First Amendment rights,
19 and I am treated as if I am in any position to
20 influence global change and willfully choose not
21 to.

22 The one time I chose to report my
23 experiences to my school, I was mercilessly
24 scrutinized about what I did to provoke the kind
25 of treatment that I received, cross-examined

1 without my consent by the people who had hurt
2 me, and then received not a shred of justice
3 despite the full encounter being on video.

4 This panel seeks to learn about how
5 Jews are treated by their schools and government
6 in recent times, and here's how. Our struggles
7 are treated as an excuse to justify a distaste
8 for political dissidents and immigrants, or we
9 are told that they don't exist to begin with.
10 We are made enemies and targets on our own
11 campuses and we are only used -- our pain is
12 only valuable when it is used as a debate
13 tactic. Privately, no one is there to protect
14 us or console us, but ourselves, and the easiest
15 way to heal from my experiences has been to talk
16 about it within my own community, because I
17 don't trust my school or government to handle it
18 with sensitivity and not get me re-victimized.

19 If the panel would like to know what
20 Jewish students, or at least myself, are begging
21 for right now, I will tell you exactly what it
22 is. I am begging you to stop using antisemitism
23 as a pretext for other political agendas, like
24 barring foreign students from entering this
25 country. Stop fear-mongering on our behalf. We

1 as a community know exactly what it's like to be
2 scapegoated and we don't wish it upon anyone
3 else.

4 Moreover, when Jews are -- when the
5 government threatens a university's
6 accreditation or funding, among other things,
7 Jews are the ones who face the repercussions.
8 We are the ones blamed by our peers and hurt by
9 our lack of access. We know that you cannot
10 codify people's tolerance or care for us and
11 we're saddened by it, but we're used to it. All
12 we want to know is that the government will stop
13 using us for political means.

14 The word around my neck reads "lehayim"
15 meaning, to life. Jews are people and in this
16 country, we think everyone is worthy of a life
17 that is dignified and worth celebrating. When
18 you make policy discussions and decisions and
19 handle antisemitism, please remember that that
20 also includes us. Thank you so much.

21 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.

22 Next speaker.

23 MR. CHIZINSKY: Good afternoon. My
24 name is Jonah Chizinsky. I am a sophomore at
25 the University of California, Santa Barbara, and

1 I serve as the president of Alpha Epsilon Pi,
2 UCSB's Jewish fraternity.

3 Nationally, antisemitism on campus is
4 rising. The Anti-Defamation League recorded
5 nearly 1,700 antisemitic incidents on U.S.
6 College campuses in 2024. Nearly one in four
7 Jewish students report taking additional
8 security precautions because they feel unsafe.
9 I'm here to show what this looks like in real
10 life.

11 UC Santa Barbara has the highest Jewish
12 population of any UC campus. Jewish students
13 make up roughly 13 percent of the undergraduate
14 student body. On paper, this should be one of
15 the safest campuses in this country to be openly
16 Jewish. However, it is not. In the last four
17 months, there have been seven antisemitic
18 attacks on our fraternity house where I live.

19 On November 23rd, six men stood outside
20 our home in the middle of the night, shouting
21 slurs and telling us to go back to Europe. Just
22 like any other fraternity our house is marked by
23 our letters, Alpha, Epsilon, and Pi. We do not
24 display political messaging. The only visible
25 association is our Jewish identity. After that

1 night, I took down our house letters because I
2 was afraid we would be targeted again.

3 In the weeks that followed eggs were
4 thrown at our house. A member's Star of David
5 necklace was ripped from his neck. Water
6 balloons were thrown at our members in the
7 middle of the night. Then on January 9th, two
8 men broke into our house and drew a swastika on
9 our bathroom mirror. A swastika is not a
10 political statement. It is a symbol meant to
11 intimidate and terrorize the Jewish people.
12 Seeing it inside my home was a violation of our
13 safety and our dignity. As president, I'm
14 responsible for the young men who join our
15 fraternity seeking community and safety. After
16 that incident, they asked me if we were safe and
17 I did not have an answer.

18 Thank you, again, for putting together
19 this listening session. Jewish students should
20 not have to question whether their home makes
21 them a target. We are not asking for special
22 treatment. We are asking for the basic
23 protections that federal civil rights guarantees
24 every single student in this nation. Jewish
25 students are depending on this Commission to

1 keep us safe. Thank you all for hearing us.

2 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.

3 Next speaker.

4 MS. KORNBERG: Good morning, everyone.

5 My name is Dana Kornberg and I am an assistant
6 professor of sociology also at the University of
7 California, Santa Barbara. At UC Santa Barbara,
8 I serve as a member of the Chancellor's Advisory
9 Committee on Antisemitism. I'm an Ashkenazi
10 Jew, myself, and a long-time synagogue member.

11 My research identifies how racial,
12 ethnic, and religious stereotypes create social
13 inequalities. So this is an issue that's really
14 important to me. Well, very insidious forms of
15 antisemitism, like those discussed by one of our
16 students, which I need to learn more about,
17 these are protected under Title VI very clearly
18 and they should be addressed appropriately.

19 I am here, however, to address the
20 expanded definition and the dangerous misuse of
21 antisemitism allegations that have also been
22 proliferating. I would like to leave you with
23 one idea, that is when allegations of
24 antisemitism target political activity rather
25 than anti-Jewish bigotry, that one of our

1 students just clearly described, they are
2 themselves antisemitic. In other words, this
3 makes false assumptions about Jewish loyalties
4 to the State of Israel. We are diverse, like
5 any other community.

6 On my campus, I've witnessed an
7 unspoken consensus, within the administration,
8 at least, that Jews support Israel and defending
9 the actions of the Israeli government and
10 military means supporting Jews. This is
11 reflected by our campus Advisory Committee on
12 Antisemitism, which like many others is guided
13 by Hillel International, which states, quote,
14 "Israel is at the heart of the work." As such,
15 they prohibit partnerships with groups that take
16 anti-Zionist political positions, including
17 Jewish organizations.

18 These stereotypes are dangerous and
19 they ignore the reality that we Jewish Americans
20 are both very diverse and deeply divided, as you
21 will hear and as you know. According to 2025
22 Jewish Federations' data, among Jews ages 18 to
23 34, one-third claim a strong emotional
24 attachment to Israel, while one-third strongly
25 disagree. Just a quarter strongly agreed that

1 Israel makes them proud to feel Jewish, while
2 one-third strongly disagreed. Again, divided.

3 We know that LGBTQ+ and working class
4 American Jews tend to feel less connected to
5 Israel and are more likely to identify as anti-
6 Zionist. Therefore, redefining antisemitism as
7 a political litmus test, not only stereotypes
8 Jews, it disproportionately targets Jews, like
9 me, who are members of other marginalized
10 groups. This was made clear when I saw Jewish
11 students, many of whom were LGBTQ+ and alienated
12 from mainstream Jewish organizations, building
13 Jewish community at student protests and which
14 included the encampments. They made kosher
15 food. They observed Shabbat. They led Passover
16 in the encampments, but at the same time, many
17 other Jewish students expressed their deep
18 discomfort with these political actions.

19 The very bizarre result of all of this
20 was that disciplinary actions taken in the name
21 of protecting some Jewish students from
22 antisemitism often targeted other Jewish
23 students.

24 The effects of this are really
25 dangerous. I've heard faculty colleagues make

1 defamatory accusations against Jews who do not
2 tie their Jewishness to Israel on my campus.
3 For example, by calling the roughly 30 percent
4 of young Jews who identify as either non or
5 anti-Zionists, Hamas supporters.

6 The stated goal of political --
7 politically motivated antisemitism allegations
8 may be the protection of Jews, but using claims
9 about Jews to distract from the actual workings
10 of power is textbook antisemitism. The
11 committee should forcefully push back against
12 this. Simply acknowledge the actual diversity
13 of Jewish people on our campuses, because the
14 most antisemitic act is to single us out,
15 stereotype us, and make us an easy target.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you.

18 All right. Welcome, everyone. We're
19 going to continue with our testimony. I just
20 want to -- I know there's a clock right here in
21 front of me, so just take a look at it as we're
22 moving forward. I don't really like cutting
23 people off, but we really have to stick to the
24 three minutes because we've got a lot of people
25 that are waiting to testify as well. So I'm

1 excited to hear from all of you.

2 We can go ahead and start with our
3 first speaker.

4 MS. FAY: Hello. My name is Noa Fay
5 and until December of this past year, I was a
6 student at Columbia University. In the fall of
7 2023, I was both in my senior year at Barnard
8 College and my first year at the School of
9 International and Public Affairs.

10 Unfortunately, this period was marred by truly
11 traumatic experiences of antisemitism, but after
12 addressing the UN and the Senate, speaking at
13 press conferences, and appearing on various news
14 segments all with the aim of achieving justice
15 and equal protection for Jewish students, there
16 are few words left for me to say on the matter
17 that have not already been spoken if not by me,
18 then by my peers.

19 For those who consider themselves
20 smart, reasonable, and respectable people, there
21 is no debate that Jewish students have been
22 discriminated against, not only by our
23 classmates, but also by our universities.

24 Despite the objective misconduct that overtook
25 my campus in the form of the pro-Palestine

1 movement starting in the fall of 2023, it was
2 not until summer 2025, that my university
3 exacted the required disciplinary measures as
4 outlined by our own codes.

5 Unfortunately, this trend is not
6 specific to Columbia. Numerous universities
7 failed to follow their own rules and protect
8 their students in the face of discrimination,
9 and it is time we ask why.

10 A colleague of mine at Yale and I
11 published a report with the University of
12 Michigan that investigated the effects of
13 foreign funding to American institutions for
14 higher education. We found two main problems.
15 First, billions of foreign dollars from nations
16 like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and others, have gone
17 illegally undocumented by schools like my own.
18 Second, the funding from these nations that is
19 documented is correlated with higher rates of
20 hate-based radicalization, like antisemitism,
21 illiberalism, and anti-Americanism on these
22 campuses. This is a much bigger problem than
23 antisemitism. This is a national security
24 concern.

25 My senior year began with chants of

1 death to Israel, but it ended with chants of
2 death to America. The pro-Palestine movement
3 holds vigils for terrorists terminated in
4 military operations. They protest Veterans Day.

5 They fly the flags of Hezbollah, Hamas, and the
6 Islamic Republic of Iran. They proudly cite
7 people like Yahya Sinwar and Osama bin Laden as
8 their inspiration. And they call for quote,
9 "The total eradication of Western civilization."

10 These are not exaggerations. These are
11 specific examples, many of which happened at my
12 own school.

13 Combined with what we know of the
14 foreign influence at play on the same campuses
15 where these trends are most prevalent, we ought
16 to be asking ourselves, who is truly behind this
17 and why are they getting away with it? There is
18 an adage amongst those knowledgeable about
19 antisemitism. What starts with the Jews never
20 ends with the Jews. So while I'm here to
21 implore my government to protect my friends and
22 me as Jews, I am at this point, mostly here to
23 implore my government to protect us all as
24 Americans. Thank you.

25 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you.

1 Next speaker, please.

2 MR. GRANOT: Good afternoon, Chair and
3 commissioners. My name -- thank you for
4 convening this session. My name is Dan Granot
5 and I'm ADL's senior director of government
6 relations and community engagement. And I'm
7 grateful for the commission's attention to this
8 urgent matter.

9 The data tells a stark story. ADL's
10 most recent audit of antisemitic incidents
11 recorded 9,354 incidents across the United
12 States. The highest number in more than 40
13 years of tracking. That represents an 893
14 percent increase over the past decade. Nearly
15 1,700 of the incidents occurred on college and
16 university campuses. An 84 percent increase
17 from the previous year, that accounted for
18 almost 20 percent of all antisemitic incidents
19 nationwide.

20 Since Hamas' October 7th terrorist
21 attack, campus conditions have deteriorated.
22 According to a 2025 ADL Campus Climate Report,
23 more than 83 percent of Jewish college students
24 surveyed reported experiencing or witnessing
25 antisemitism. Nearly 23 percent took additional

1 security precautions. 41 percent felt the need
2 to hide their Jewish identity. And more than 92
3 percent of students who experienced or witnessed
4 antisemitism did not report it to campus
5 authorities, often because they lacked
6 confidence they would lead to meaningful action.

7 Behind these numbers are real students.

8 We've heard from students who were told that
9 Zionists, those who believe Israel has a right
10 to exist as a Jewish state, are not welcome in
11 certain campus spaces, effectively excluding the
12 majority of Jewish students. We've heard from
13 students who removed their Stars of David before
14 walking to class or them from their doorways, or
15 who, quote, "Changed their name on their ride
16 share apps to not sound Jewish." From students
17 who were blocked from entering campus buildings
18 or are physically assaulted and from countless
19 students who sought help from administrators and
20 were met with silence, delay, or minimization.

21 Faculty have reported similar trends.
22 According to a 2025 report ADL produced with the
23 Academic Engagement Network, more than 73
24 percent of surveyed faculty observed anti-Jewish
25 activity from faculty administrators or staff.

1 On some campuses so-called shadow boycotts
2 empowered by the broader Boycott, Divestment,
3 and Sanctions movement, or BDS movement, have
4 discouraged partnerships with Israeli academics
5 or blocked co-sponsorship of events with Jewish
6 or pro-Israel groups, and more than half of
7 those surveyed -- of most -- more than half of
8 the surveyed faculty believe their campuses have
9 been affected.

10 To increase transparency and
11 accountability, ADL created a first of its kind
12 Campus Antisemitism Report Card to provide a
13 snapshot of the current state of campuses and
14 how they're responding. But this is not simply
15 about offensive speech. It's about whether
16 Jewish students can access educational
17 opportunities on equal terms and whether Jewish
18 staff and faculty can fully participate without
19 fear of marginalization.

20 To help respond consistently and
21 fairly, ADL supports the use of the IHRA working
22 definition of antisemitism, including the 11
23 contemporary examples, which is used by more
24 than 40 countries, more than 35 U.S. states in
25 both Democratic and Republican administrations.

1 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act guarantees
2 students will not face discrimination based on
3 shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics. And
4 when Jewish students feel compelled to hide who
5 they are or avoid certain spaces, that promises
6 is not fulfilled.

7 This commission's investigation could
8 not be more urgent. Enforcement must be timely,
9 transparent, and consistent. Universities must
10 have clear reporting policies, robust training,
11 and meaningful consequences for harassment and
12 policy violations. Students, staff, and faculty
13 must know where to turn and believe they will be
14 heard. Jewish campus community members deserve
15 campuses where they can learn and express their
16 identity without fear. This is not a political
17 issue. It's a civil rights imperative. Thank
18 you so much for your leadership and for your
19 commitment to ensuring that U.S. campuses remain
20 places of opportunity and not exclusion.

21 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you, Dan.

22 All right. Next speaker, please.

23 MR. GOLD: I am Leonard Gold, the
24 executive producer of Blind Spot, the only
25 current film exclusively devoted to campus

1 antisemitism, showing the problem both pre and
2 post 10-7 and what can be done about it.

3 It stars our undergraduates, who refuse
4 to hide their identities in the face of
5 unchecked antisemitism and the evil of
6 indifference that fostered it, and who instead
7 spoke out against it at great risk to
8 themselves. One of those students Yasmino
9 Hepsian was here yesterday and another Sabrina
10 Soffer is here today. The supporting cast
11 includes elected officials, lawyers, two of
12 whom, Carly Gammill and Ken Marcus, were also
13 here yesterday. Authors, journalists, and one
14 remarkable college president along with several
15 school officials who personify the problem.

16 Independently produced and beholden to
17 nothing but the truth and nobody, but the
18 students, Blind Spot takes a raw look at the
19 problem through the eyes of 20 year olds
20 directly impacted by it, showing the toll it
21 took on them, some of those responsible for it,
22 and many who helped and supported them. And
23 long before the release of the new Henry Louis
24 Gates film, Blind Spot examined the shared
25 history of, excuse me, discrimination suffered

1 by Blacks and Jews and shared efforts to fight
2 it.

3 As Blind Spot shows, the IHRA
4 definition and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
5 are powerful tools for fighting campus
6 antisemitism yet, despite the elimination of
7 encampments and other results of the threat to
8 withhold federal funding from schools which
9 failed to protect Jewish students, the
10 underlying hatred which gave rise to the
11 encampments is alive and well and could explode
12 again at any time.

13 Two University of Pennsylvania students
14 told me recently that while they feel safe to be
15 openly Jewish on campus now, they must choose
16 between hiding their identities from antisemitic
17 professors or avoiding their classes altogether
18 to cope with faculty antisemitism at Penn.
19 Compare that with my experience at Penn in the
20 1970s. As a classmate of mine put it, nobody
21 went to Hillel then because the whole campus
22 felt like Hillel. Today, many Jewish students
23 see Hillel and Chabad as the only safe campus
24 spaces for them to be who they are.

25 Schools often invoke academic freedom

1 to justify their indifference to antisemitism
2 while failing to recognize freedom's inseparable
3 partner, responsibility. Academic
4 responsibility includes eliminating the blind
5 spot towards Jews and our inextricable
6 connection to our ancient homeland and having
7 zero tolerance for antisemitism in classrooms,
8 on campus, and in curricula, academic
9 departments, and administrative staffs. Faculty
10 must teach students how to think, not what to
11 think, and how to disagree without being
12 disagreeable, while being prohibited from
13 discriminating against or creating a hostile
14 learning environment for Jews.

15 Student clubs that engage in anti-
16 normalization or exclusionary practices against
17 Jews must lose the benefits of school
18 recognition, including access to school
19 resources and facilities. Anti-discrimination
20 programs and policies must treat Jews and
21 antisemitism on an equal footing with other
22 protected groups and forms of prejudice.

23 Blind Spot examines such problems and
24 how they can be prevented and fought and reminds
25 us that Jews have overcome many greater

1 challenges than this, while imploring us to have
2 the strength and courage to overcome this, too.

3 The film and more information and materials can
4 be found at blindspotmovie.com, and we'd be
5 happy to arrange a screening at your
6 convenience. Thank you.

7 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.

8 Next speaker, please.

9 MS. SULTAN-REISLER: Chair Garza, Vice
10 Chair Nourse, and members of the commission. My
11 name is Tekoa Sultan-Reisler and I'm a senior at
12 the University of Maryland, where I'm studying
13 environmental science and history. I'm active
14 in the Jewish community there, where I lead
15 services and sing in a Jewish acapella group.
16 I'm also the president of J Street U on campus,
17 an organization that pursues shared safety for
18 Israelis and Palestinians.

19 Throughout college, I've occasionally
20 witnessed and heard about discreet incidents of
21 antisemitism at UMD. After October 7th, 2023,
22 the antisemitism became more brazen. During a
23 campus protest against the war in Gaza, someone
24 waved the flag of Hezbollah, a terrorist
25 organization that targets Jews worldwide. Also,

1 during a demonstration, someone wrote the
2 phrase, Holocaust 2.0, in chalk. I was
3 distressed to see a call for another Holocaust
4 on my campus.

5 In addition, recent events involving
6 the student government displayed significant
7 antisemitism. Some members of the student
8 government wanted the university to adopt the
9 policies of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction
10 movement, or BDS, against Israel. During
11 elections for student government, supporters of
12 BDS created a voting guide in which they
13 highlighted in red those candidates they
14 believed did not share their values and human
15 rights. All of the Jewish candidates running in
16 contested elections were red-listed, reflecting
17 an assumption that all Jews support the Israeli
18 government's policies. Prominent student
19 organizations distributed this red list leading
20 to the defeat of nine Jewish candidates. Now,
21 UMD has a student government virtually devoid of
22 Jewish voices for an undergraduate body that is
23 nearly 25 percent -- 20 percent Jewish. Excuse
24 me.

25 To be clear, I do not feel unsafe on

1 campus merely because students express
2 opposition to the actions of the Israeli
3 government or support BDS. Many people have
4 serious concerns about Israel's conduct of the
5 war in Gaza and they express their views without
6 blaming or targeting Jewish people.

7 The difficulty arises when people who
8 disagree with Israel's government make Jewish
9 students a target of their anger and when they
10 silence Jewish voices on campus. The
11 distinction is that criticism of the Israeli
12 government and its policies without blaming Jews
13 is not inherently antisemitic. Categorizing
14 political criticism as antisemitism curbs free
15 speech and makes it more difficult to target the
16 true antisemitism. In fact, equating protests
17 against the policies of Israel with antisemitism
18 is in and of itself antisemitic, because it
19 characterizes all Jewish people as an extension
20 of the Israeli state and its policies.

21 The Trump administration has co-opted
22 this issue of antisemitism on campuses to
23 support its agenda. The administration uses
24 anti-Israel political protests, in which
25 students express their political views, to

1 justify withholding federal funding and
2 targeting immigrants. The action of the
3 administration serves only to increase
4 antisemitism on campuses where people think that
5 Jews are responsible for the harsh measures the
6 administration directs toward the academic
7 community and institutions.

8 Jewish students do not want to be used
9 as a pretext to justify this divisive and
10 xenophobic action of the administration.
11 Instead, protecting students' right of free
12 speech and expression would allow all students
13 to feel safe on campus regardless of faith or
14 ethnicity. Thank you.

15 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.
16 Next speaker.

17 MS. CULLEN: Thank you to the
18 Commission and Chair Garza for holding this
19 important listening session and for giving me
20 the opportunity to speak today.

21 My name is Elizabeth Cullen and I'm the
22 director of government relations for Hadassah:
23 The Women's Zionist Organization of America.
24 Hadassah is the largest women's Zionist and
25 Jewish women's organization in the country. We

1 have 300,000 members and supporters in nearly
2 every congressional district. We advocate for
3 measures to fight back against antisemitism as
4 well as policies that strengthen the U.S.-Israel
5 relationship and advance women's and public
6 health.

7 Our members have been deeply and
8 personally impacted by escalating antisemitism.

9 Six of our Hadassah members were injured in a
10 violent attack in Boulder, including Karen
11 Diamond, who died of her injuries. Even before
12 this violent attack, our members have shown that
13 they are deeply affected by rising antisemitism.

14 In 2024, we conducted a survey to
15 better understand how this is impacting Jewish
16 women. The results gathered from over 1,000
17 responses were very disturbing. Of the women
18 who responded, two-thirds reported that
19 antisemitism has impacted their lives, more than
20 60 percent feel afraid. And this was again,
21 before the Boulder attack. And over half
22 reported that they have taken steps to hide
23 their identities. Women reported feeling
24 isolated, threatened, and afraid, worried for
25 themselves and their children. Some

1 specifically spoke in the survey results to
2 encountering hatred at school and in college.
3 Some reported, for example, both of my kids
4 faced antisemitism at school. One was told to
5 go back to the ovens. Another said, I had to
6 quit my tenure position as I was harassed and
7 punished for speaking up. A third said,
8 antisemitism was terrible on the college campus
9 where I was working. I've learned to trust no
10 one outside the Jewish community. And a fourth
11 said, I've been wanting to drop out of college
12 due to the antisemitism I faced.

13 Hadassah also has an Educator's Council
14 composed of more than 3,000 teachers in K-12
15 schools as well as faculty and colleges and
16 universities. We hear regularly from our
17 council's members that they are confronting,
18 observing, experiencing antisemitism from their
19 students, fellow teachers, professional unions,
20 in curricula, and in classrooms.

21 Hadassah is also a global healthcare
22 organization with robust physician, nurses, and
23 allied health professional councils, whose
24 leaders regularly report antisemitic incidents
25 occurring in academic health centers, health

1 professional associations, and, perhaps more
2 troubling, in health professional schools.

3 Let me be clear. Hate has no place in
4 healthcare or health professional education, and
5 it's vital that our students who are learning to
6 be our future trusted healthcare providers are
7 taught to provide unbiased care.

8 For these reasons, Hadassah stands up
9 against antisemitism and other forms of hate and
10 extremism. We advocate for policies to address
11 antisemitism, such as the adoption of the IHRA
12 definition, the expansion of funding and
13 policies that protect Jewish organizations and
14 houses of worship, and to strengthen civil
15 rights protections.

16 Our country is stronger when the people
17 in our communities, schools, universities, and
18 workplaces respect each other's differences and
19 do not discriminate or promote hate on the basis
20 of someone's identity.

21 Thank you for giving me the opportunity
22 to share Hadassah's perspective.

23 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you very much. Oh,
24 I'm sorry.

25 MS. STULMAN: Thank you. My name is

1 Amanda Stulman, and I speak today on behalf of
2 the Intersectionality Project of the Legal
3 Insurrection Foundation. Thank you,
4 commissioners, for the opportunity to speak with
5 you today on how intersectionality ideology is
6 one of the root causes of mainstreaming
7 antisemitism on American campuses.

8 As a theory, intersectionality was
9 originally most well-known for the idea that
10 different forms of discrimination can overlap
11 and should be reflected as such in the law.
12 However, even from its inception,
13 intersectionality used a framework of systems of
14 privilege and oppression to assign status based
15 on group identity.

16 Viewed through a simplistic and
17 divisive oppressor/oppressed dynamic,
18 intersectionalists argue that all struggles
19 against oppression are linked, encouraging
20 perceived marginalized groups, no matter how
21 disparate or in conflict their interest, to
22 unite together and radicalize collective action.

23 For decades, intersectionality has been the
24 dominant ideology on campus, both in and out of
25 the classroom.

1 Through their focus on Israel,
2 activists have placed Jews firmly in an
3 oppressor role. This is, in large part, the
4 result of years of false marketing of the
5 Israeli/Palestinian conflict using
6 intersectional language. Under this twisted
7 framing, the existence of Israel itself is
8 labeled racist, genocidal, apartheid, white
9 supremacist, imperialist. Jews, unless they
10 openly adopt this intersectional lens of Israel
11 as illegitimate, risk being tainted as white,
12 privileged, Nazi, colonizers, oppressors.

13 This is not a political dispute about
14 particular Israeli policies. It is part of an
15 ongoing effort to de-legitimize a Western
16 democracy, and the use of such extreme and
17 hyperbolic language invites hate and violence.
18 The main form of antisemitism on campus today is
19 viewing Jews through the prism of anti-Zionism.

20 This leaves Jews fair game to be attacked
21 socially, verbally, and even physically, as you
22 heard yesterday and today.

23 As ever, Jews are the canaries in the
24 coal mine. What starts with Jews on campus does
25 not end either on campus or end with the Jews.

1 On or off campus, intersectionality serves as an
2 intellectual foundation for violence, terrorism,
3 as well as normalizing more mainstream
4 antisemitism and anti-Westernism.

5 One example of the former took place
6 less than a year ago, just over a mile from
7 here, on American soil at an American Jewish
8 museum, at an American Jewish Committee event,
9 which was focused on humanitarian relief and not
10 billed as related to Israel. Two attendees were
11 gunned down by a man shouting that common
12 collegiate refrain, free Palestine.
13 Intersectionality ideology taught on campuses
14 today puts Jews and anyone allied with Jews in
15 the crosshairs. It must be addressed.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you very much.

18 Thank you all for your testimony today.

19 Okay, we can go ahead and get started.

20 MR. HAKIM: Madam Chair, commissioners,
21 thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name
22 is Saul Hakim. I'm a proud Syrian Jew, recent
23 graduate of Binghamton University, a state
24 university of New York, and a first-year student
25 at Georgetown Law.

1 Within four days of October 7th, the
2 war abroad came to Binghamton. Almost overnight
3 protests appeared out of thin air. Chants
4 calling for intifada, chants praising
5 resistance, chants envisioning a future without
6 a Jewish Homeland. This was not mourning. It
7 was celebration while Jewish students were still
8 in shock, still processing the massacre of our
9 friends and families in Israel.

10 Soon after, recognized campus
11 organizations openly collaborated and aligned
12 themselves with entities that praised Hamas'
13 attacks against Jewish civilians. They sent a
14 message to Jewish students about who belonged
15 and who did not. There was even an article in
16 our student paper undermining the rape and
17 sexual assault of Jewish women as white women's
18 tears.

19 Then came glorification. A student
20 dressed as Yahya Sinwar for Halloween. The
21 architect of mass murder turned into a costume,
22 a joke, and a provocation, a signal that Jewish
23 pain was not only dismissed, but mocked.

24 Then came institutionalization. A BDS
25 resolution passed in our student government, and

1 the very next day, a swastika was etched into
2 the ground just outside that room.

3 This was not a series of unrelated
4 incidents. It was a progression from rhetoric
5 to celebration, to normalization, and to
6 intimidation. I lived inside that progression.

7 I was spit at, I was cursed at, I was publicly
8 defamed and slandered for being a Jew who
9 supports Israel. Every day that I walked
10 through common areas on my campus, I felt the
11 glares, heard the whispers, and understood that
12 my presence, alone, was an affront to so many.

13 I stood up because so many others felt
14 they could not. Jewish students removed their
15 Stars of David, they stopped speaking in class,
16 and they allowed their beliefs to be trampled by
17 students and professors, alike, out of fear of
18 reprisal. Visibility became dangerous. And
19 even today, some of the testimony you may hear
20 reflects the internalized fear that Jewish
21 students hide -- to hide who they are and
22 minimize their experiences in the name of
23 fitting in.

24 I'm a Middle Eastern Jew. My family
25 traces its roots to Syria before we were forced

1 to flee. Yet I became persona non grata in
2 spaces that celebrated Middle Eastern identity.

3 My first year in school, I won a
4 research award in the Middle Eastern Studies
5 Department. The next, I left because there was
6 no longer any space for my voice.

7 Jewish students were systematically
8 purged from minority and multicultural spaces
9 altogether. I graduated known as both the most
10 loved and most hated person on my campus. Loved
11 by Jewish students because I fought for their
12 dignity. Hated by others because I refused to
13 disappear.

14 I want to say this clearly. Unlike
15 many campuses, there were administrators at
16 Binghamton who had our back. I'm grateful to
17 them. They listened, and they acted. But
18 culture moves faster than bureaucracy, and when
19 antisemitism becomes normalized, good intentions
20 are not enough.

21 My story was not plastered across
22 national headlines. I did not attend an Ivy
23 League institution. I attended a public
24 university in upstate New York. There were no
25 cameras, no congressional hearings, just

1 thousands of Jewish students navigating
2 hostility without visibility or protection.

3 That is why I'm here. My story is the
4 story of countless others. I urge this
5 Commission to recommend the adoption of the IHRA
6 working definition of antisemitism, robust
7 enforcement of Title VI through trained
8 coordinators, and sustained detention not only
9 to elite campuses, but to the public
10 universities across our country, where the same
11 civil rights violations occur without a
12 spotlight. Civil rights must apply everywhere
13 and to everyone or they apply nowhere and to no
14 one.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you very much.

17 Just a quick reminder. Three minutes.

18 I don't want to cut anybody off, so --

19 Go ahead.

20 MS. SOFFER: Members of the Commission,
21 I'm Sabrina Soffer, a research fellow at the
22 Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign
23 Affairs and an alumna of the George Washington
24 University. There, I led the school's
25 antisemitism task force and was branded, quote,

1 "The most hated Jew on campus."

2 This May, I graduated, disheartened, as
3 a plaintiff, suing GW, due to its persistent and
4 pervasive antisemitism.

5 The chaos that followed October 7th was
6 years in the making. It was not a grassroots
7 movement, but a highly coordinated pipeline of
8 hate. It's seated in the classroom, legitimized
9 by academia, then unleashed on campuses and city
10 streets. Maligned foreign actors like Qatar
11 funnel billions into American institutions while
12 sponsoring the Muslim Brotherhood and sheltering
13 its Palestinian branch, Hamas. Its funding has
14 hijacked our institutions into compliance with,
15 quote, "Social and cultural customs that
16 prohibit Judaism." The pipeline of hate
17 manifests threefold, presenting distorted
18 narratives as fact, politics supplanting
19 education, and faculty mobilizing students for
20 anti-Israel activity.

21 My senior thesis examined a Brown
22 University professor charging Israel with
23 genocide. He admitted the claim wasn't legally
24 accurate, but rhetorically necessary to persuade
25 publics. At a GW conference titled Middle East

1 Knowledge Production in the Aftermath of October
2 7th, a panelist advised teaching BDS material
3 quietly in the classroom in states where BDS was
4 banned.

5 Another scholar rationalized Hamas and
6 Osama bin Laden's letter to America, stating
7 that, quote, "The meaning of 9/11 was not fact,
8 but a constructed narrative." Antisemitism is a
9 test of America. The war on terror has evolved.

10 This time, we confront intellectual terror.
11 This is a national security threat.

12 Distorting facts to fit political
13 ideology breaches faculty codes of conduct and
14 falls within the federal definition of research
15 misconduct. I raised concerns repeatedly with
16 administrators, but was met with deliberate
17 indifference. My peers faced retaliation and
18 classic DARVO tactic, deny, attack, and reverse
19 victim and offender roles. One student proudly
20 told me, quote, "I came to college a moderate.
21 I'm proud now to be radicalized." Sure enough,
22 one GW faculty member in the encampment
23 declared, quote, "Students enact what we teach."

24 Classroom incitement can turn deadly.
25 My friends, Yaron and Sara, Israeli Embassy

1 staffers, were murdered just blocks from here.
2 The killer shouted, free Palestine. Among his
3 influences, the University of Illinois English
4 Department and the Democratic Socialists of
5 America.

6 Antisemitism will not be contained by
7 more security. We must stop this pipeline of
8 hate in its tracks. Administrators must be held
9 accountable for failing to enforce academic
10 integrity and upholding their duty of care. We
11 must scrutinize foreign funding, syllabi review,
12 and the composition of academic departments.

13 Settlement agreements must have real
14 teeth and mechanisms to ensure compliance. We
15 Americans must restore George Washington's
16 promise to, quote, "Give bigotry no sanction,
17 persecution no assistance, and be a light amid
18 this pipeline of hate."

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.

21 I believe -- are there any walk-ins?

22 No? Okay.

23 Why don't we take a ten-minute break,
24 and then we'll pivot to the folks that are on
25 the phone? So ten-minute break. We'll come

1 back at 1:07 p.m. Eastern.

2 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
3 went off the record at 12:57 p.m. and resumed at
4 1:14 p.m.)

5 CHAIR GARZA: All right. Welcome back.

6 The Commission is going to come back to order
7 at 1:14 p.m. Eastern Time. We're going to now
8 proceed with our telephonic speakers. As a
9 reminder, each speaker has three minutes. And I
10 will be calling you by name, but if you feel
11 inclined, please state your full name and the
12 affiliation for the record.

13 I will be giving a 30-second warning on
14 these because we have folks electronically, and
15 as I understand it, you may not have a time
16 clock in front of you. So we're going to go
17 ahead and start with Tal Zussman.

18 If you are on, please unmute yourself
19 and begin. And I -- again, the name that I
20 called was Tal Zussman. If not, we'll move on
21 to the next speaker.

22 MR. ZUSSMAN: Can you hear me?

23 CHAIR GARZA: Yes. Please begin. I'm
24 going to give you a --

25 MR. ZUSSMAN: Hello.

1 CHAIR GARZA: -- 30 second warning.

2 MR. ZUSSMAN: Okay. Thank you.

3 My name is Tal Zussman. I'm a Ph.D.
4 student at Columbia University. As a graduate
5 student, I'm represented by a labor union,
6 Student Workers of Columbia, or SWC for short.

7 In October 2023, SWC voted to publish
8 statements in support of October 7th, justifying
9 it as resistance. Any objections by Jewish and
10 Israeli students to the support for terrorism
11 were dismissed as insignificant. In fact, we
12 were told that if we disagreed, we could leave
13 the union. If only it were that simple.

14 Under labor law, the union is the
15 exclusive representative of all employees in its
16 bargaining unit, meaning that they still
17 represent us in negotiating over our wages,
18 healthcare, and employment issues.

19 Jewish and Israeli students at Columbia
20 are forced to be represented by people who
21 celebrated the massacre of our friends and
22 family. Over the last two years, SWC has
23 grossly violated the privileges granted to it
24 under labor law. They joined Columbia
25 University Apartheid Divest, the group behind

1 Columbia's protests, funding them in co-
2 sponsoring their protests, ostensibly making
3 them protected union activity, making it
4 significantly more complicated for Columbia to
5 take action.

6 These SWC protests consistently feature
7 chants like, Zionists off campus now, making it
8 clear that SWC's official position is that we
9 should be removed from campus. How can we
10 possibly trust or be fairly represented by this
11 union? When we expressed this, we were called,
12 quote, "Agro-genocidal," by SWC's president.

13 During the encampment, SWC sent a
14 letter to members that if we experienced
15 harassment, we could reach out to their non-
16 discrimination committee, which was a nice
17 sentiment, but the very members of that
18 committee were the people engaging in
19 harassment. SWC picketed in support of the
20 encampment, holding UAW signs claiming that it
21 was protected labor activity. SWC's president
22 and other leaders were later suspended or
23 expelled for their roles in taking over
24 buildings like Hamilton and Butler. They are
25 still in leadership positions despite not being

1 enrolled.

2 SWC is currently bargaining with
3 Columbia. They're demanding BDS, the
4 cancellation of Columbia's programs with Tel
5 Aviv University, and amnesty for protestors.
6 These are not labor issues. SWC is abusing
7 bargaining in order to further antisemitic
8 political goals. Many of these grad students
9 will become faculty at other universities. At
10 Columbia, faculty groups like AUP have
11 collaborated with student protestors, harassing
12 Jewish students in claiming that there has been
13 no antisemitism on campus.

14 One such faculty group published an
15 article this week saying that Jewish students
16 would be weaponizing allegations of antisemitism
17 at --

18 CHAIR GARZA: 26 seconds.

19 MR. ZUSSMAN: -- this very hearing
20 along with an antisemitic cartoon captioned
21 Kicked Out Versus Cashed Out, depicting a Jewish
22 student grabbing for money while protestors are
23 arrested.

24 These faculty groups and student unions
25 orchestrated and supported the extreme cases of

1 antisemitic harassment we've witnessed over the
2 last two years. While the protests have died
3 down, these groups continue to spread
4 antisemitism with impunity. It's critical to
5 understand that, at this point, they are their
6 real obstacle for universities seeking to
7 implement common-sense reforms.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much. The
10 next speaker that I have is Meirav Solomon.
11 Please unmute --

12 MR. ZUSSMAN: Yeah.

13 CHAIR GARZA: -- yourself. Okay. Go
14 ahead and begin. I'm going to give you a 30-
15 second warning.

16 MS. SOLOMON: All right. My name is
17 Meirav Solomon. I grew up in Raleigh, North
18 Carolina, and I'm a senior at Tufts University,
19 studying international relations. I'm a proud
20 Jewish American, the daughter of two rabbis, and
21 currently serve as the National President of the
22 J Street U student board.

23 On March 5th, 2025, I testified before
24 the Senate Judiciary Committee, asking them to
25 take the rise in both antisemitism and the

1 weaponization of antisemitism seriously. I
2 talked about students being excluded from clubs
3 because they were Jewish, campuses vandalized
4 with swastikas, and students being blamed for
5 the actions of a foreign government.

6 As I speak before you today, I'm
7 disappointed and horrified at the actions the
8 administration has taken in my name. When I ask
9 senators to fight to end antisemitism by
10 listening to Jewish students' unique and diverse
11 experiences and not use us to advance partisan
12 agendas, I meant it. And yet, this
13 administration has created a situation in which
14 Jewish students are seen as responsible for the
15 unjust and antidemocratic actions that this
16 administration has taken and continues to take
17 on our campuses.

18 Little did I know how much worse it
19 would get for my peers at Tufts. Weeks after my
20 testimony, Homeland Security agents abducted
21 Rumeysa Ozturk, a Fulbright scholar and graduate
22 student at Tufts, three minutes away from my
23 house in Somerville. They took Rumeysa because
24 she wrote an op-ed that the Trump administration
25 did not like.

1 DHS transferred her to an ICE facility
2 in which she struggled immensely with health
3 complications and to fulfill religious
4 obligations, due to the lack of medical care,
5 food, and religious accommodation. Dozens more
6 stories like Rumeysa's exist. Each is a
7 flagrant violation of First Amendment rights,
8 and none did anything to protect Jewish
9 students. Deporting our classmates, extorting
10 our universities, and censoring free speech will
11 never make Jewish students safe. Jewish student
12 safety is inextricably intertwined with the
13 safety of all students on campus.

14 As I said in my testimony almost
15 exactly a year ago, as the president's close
16 advisors raise their arms in fascist salutes,
17 bigots on social media glorify Nazis and
18 denigrate Jews, and white nationalist groups
19 stage xenophobic rallies, we must be honest
20 about the more urgent threat to the Jewish
21 community. It is not student protestors, but
22 the bloody legacy of Pittsburgh and Poway,
23 Charlottesville, and the Capitol riot. I'm
24 grateful for the chance to address this
25 Commission and hopeful that this session will

1 lead to action.

2 ARPA, the Anti-Feminism Response and
3 Prevention Act, introduced in the House in
4 December, is a great first step. It would
5 expand the nonprofit security grant program,
6 revert damaging cuts to the Department of
7 Education's Office of Civil Rights, and require
8 universities to designate Title VI compliance
9 coordinators.

10 We deserve a thoughtful and sincere
11 strategy to keep all students safe and preserve
12 the First Amendment rights that are core to our
13 education.

14 Congress and the United --

15 CHAIR GARZA: Thirty seconds.

16 MS. SOLOMON: -- States must protect
17 the values of pluralism and democracy, which
18 allow Jews and all Americans to thrive.

19 Thank you for allowing me the
20 opportunity to participate in this Commission's
21 important work.

22 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much. Our
23 next speaker is Professor Amanda Shanor. If you
24 would, please unmute yourself. Again, I'll give
25 you 30 seconds once you get to that time.

1 Please begin.

2 MS. SHANOR: Thank you. Chair Garza
3 and members of the Commission, thank you so much
4 for the opportunity to testify. My name is
5 Amanda Shanor, and I'm an associate professor at
6 the University of Pennsylvania, where I teach
7 and write about constitutional law, particularly
8 the First Amendment.

9 I want to focus my comments today on
10 the administration's use of allegations of
11 discrimination, including antisemitism, as their
12 justification for actions that are plainly
13 unlawful and unconstitutional, and that
14 undermine, rather than advance, both civil
15 rights, including the civil rights of Jewish
16 Americans, and U.S. constitutionalism more
17 broadly.

18 In short, the administration is using
19 civil rights law and rhetoric as a lever for
20 ideological control of higher education. It is
21 doing so through coercive threats and agreements
22 that evade statutory requirements and expand
23 executive power and discretion.

24 The administration has repeatedly
25 threatened higher education with catastrophic

1 consequences, sweeping funding cutoffs, loss of
2 eligibility for student loans, revocation of
3 visas, and the ability to host international
4 students or faculty, tax and endowment
5 penalties, suspension and debarment, and
6 exposure to civil and criminal liability. These
7 threats have been used to strong-arm
8 universities into agreements that lock in the
9 administration's contested legal interpretation,
10 which, in some cases, are inconsistent with
11 governing law and allow federal officials to
12 declare non-compliance and reopen investigation.

13 In so doing, they allow the executive
14 to make educational policy without legislation
15 or lawful rulemaking. Many of these agreements
16 condition access to federal funding on sweeping
17 demands about admissions, hiring, protests, and
18 discipline policy.

19 Critically, these demands are not
20 limited to preventing, or when being proven
21 discrimination, in a specific federally funded
22 program. They attempt, instead, to restructure
23 university governance and speech environments
24 far more broadly.

25 For example, the compact and proposed

1 Harvard deal calls for federal oversight of the
2 ideological composition of faculties, including
3 such requirements as insulating, quote/unquote,
4 "Conservative ideas from criticism and
5 transforming or abolishing entire academic
6 department." Two federal courts have found that
7 demands like these use antisemitism as a pretext
8 to establish government orthodoxy. The result
9 is the chilling of constitutional freedom.

10 Faculty and students reasonably fear
11 that speech, teaching, or research that
12 displease the federal officials will trigger
13 potentially crushing sanction. In fact, these
14 are also broadly unconstitutional under well-
15 established law.

16 The First Amendment forbids the
17 government from imposing political orthodoxy.
18 It prohibits the government from using the
19 spending power to suppress, disfavor viewpoints,
20 or compel ideological informative. And it
21 forbids coercing third parties, including
22 universities, into silencing or regulating the
23 expression of others, such as students or
24 faculty.

25 Due process, likewise, forbids vague,

1 malleable standards enforced discretionarily.
2 And separation of powers forbids the executive
3 from ignoring --

4 CHAIR GARZA: Thirty seconds.

5 MS. SHANOR: -- statutory requirement.

6 Civil rights laws are critically important, but
7 their enforcement must be lawful and
8 constitutional. Antisemitism is a real and
9 urgent problem, but its use at the pretext to
10 curtail First Amendment freedom and expand
11 executive power is dangerous for all Americans.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much. We're
14 going to go to our next speaker, David
15 Rubinstein. If you are --

16 MR. RUBINSTEIN: Can you hear me?

17 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, we can hear you.
18 We're going to try something different because I
19 -- it pains me to interrupt people. So if you
20 go beyond three minutes, I'll go ahead and stop
21 you at that point, okay? But please begin.

22 MR. RUBINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 My name is David Rubinstein, and I'm a
24 Ph.D. candidate at Cornell. Although I do not
25 want to be, I'm represented by the Cornell

1 Graduate Student Union, CGSU. When I objected
2 to pro-Hamas celebrations on campus, a CGSU
3 organizer emailed my full department, calling me
4 a, quote, "Apartheid apologist." When Jewish
5 students were targeted in their offices, CGSU
6 claimed Cornell needed assistance to discipline
7 the culprits.

8 When grad students were suspended for
9 leading disruptive protests calling for, quote,
10 "intifada revolution," CGSU demanded their
11 reinstatement. In contract negotiations, CGSU
12 demanded that all Ph.D. students be forced to
13 pay them. While Cornell initially pledged to
14 protect us, the university reneged on its
15 promises and agreed to mandatory dues. The sole
16 exception was what federal law provided already
17 that religious objectors could seek an exemption
18 to pay a charity instead.

19 While Cornell promised this would be
20 easy, the university caved again and agreed that
21 students must allow the union to, quote,
22 "evaluate" whether to exempt them from forced
23 dues. Cornell's Jewish Ph.D. students must now
24 beg the union for permission not to fund its
25 pro-Hamas activism.

1 When CGSU refused to process my
2 objection, Cornell and the union left me no
3 choice but to file discrimination charges at the
4 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, with
5 legal aid from the National Right to Work Legal
6 Defense Foundation. CGSU, then belatedly
7 recognized my objection, but other objections
8 are still being stonewalled.

9 CGSU has since denied the existence of
10 even narrow exemptions from forced dues. As
11 recently as this Monday, the union has
12 threatened students with termination proceedings
13 if we refuse to pay them. When Jewish students
14 begged Cornell to act to end this harassment,
15 the university redirected their complaints to
16 the union. And when the union recently called
17 for, quote, "resistance against Israel," quote,
18 "by any means necessary," Cornell directed our
19 complaints to a federal office in Buffalo.
20 Instead of protecting its students, Cornell
21 sticks its head in the sand.

22 Protecting students from union
23 antisemitism and forced association should not
24 be controversial. It is wrong to make the
25 support of any ideological organization a

1 condition of earning a Ph.D. Cornell must be
2 held accountable to its obligations under the
3 Civil Rights Act. When the university allows
4 CGSU to create a hostile environment, it must
5 face consequences.

6 Finally, Ph.D. students should be
7 reclassified as students, not workers subject to
8 union control. This was settled law until 2016,
9 when the National Labor Relations Board
10 erroneously classified us as employees. The
11 NLRB should rectify this error to protect Jewish
12 students from being forced to pay for the
13 privilege of being harassed. The abuse of labor
14 law to promote antisemitism needs to stop.

15 Thank you for giving me the opportunity
16 to testify.

17 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much. We're
18 going to go to our next speaker, Jessica
19 Marglin. If you could come off mute again, I'm
20 not going to give you a 30-second warning, but I
21 will after the three minute.

22 Is Jessica with us?

23 MS. MARGLIN: Can you hear me?

24 CHAIR GARZA: Yes. Please proceed --

25 MS. MARGLIN: Can you hear me now?

1 CHAIR GARZA: Yes. Perfect. Loud and
2 clear.

3 MS. MARGLIN: I speak on behalf of 21
4 professors of Jewish studies across the United
5 States. We teach a wide range of courses to
6 Jewish students and all students in our
7 universities. We hold diverse political
8 perspectives on pressing issues in the United
9 States, Israel, and, of course, the rest of the
10 world. Our expertise comes not from any
11 partisan agenda, but rather from our years of
12 researching and teaching about the wide range of
13 Jewish experiences, cultures, and texts at
14 universities in the United States.

15 We would like to offer three points.

16 First, teaching students in an open and
17 welcoming environment is a primary professional
18 obligation. The alternative impairs the
19 student's ability to learn. Respectful
20 disagreement, though often uncomfortable, is
21 essential to creating a thriving, productive,
22 and non-hostile learning environment.

23 In taking action to combat
24 antisemitism, this Commission must anticipate
25 the limiting speech and academic inquiry will

1 damage students' ability to speak freely and
2 learn. All students benefit when they can
3 openly explore ideas that exist in the world
4 around them.

5 Some of us have witnessed efforts to
6 vet syllabi or purge classes based on certain
7 words or topics. Far from combating
8 antisemitism, such efforts endanger freedoms and
9 rights that have allowed Jews, among other
10 minoritized groups, to thrive.

11 Second, experts in our field who study
12 the varieties of Jewish attitudes towards
13 Zionism, historically, and in the present, all
14 agree that Zionism has changed over time and
15 cannot be regarded as an essential aspect or
16 Jewish -- of Judaism or Jewish identity for all
17 Jews.

18 Even as 19th, 20th and 21st-century
19 Jews have self-identified as Zionist, they've
20 actively debated what this term means. Moreover
21 Zionism, itself, has undergone transformation
22 just as different Jews' relationship to it has
23 changed. In other words, it's impossible to
24 equate all Jews or Judaism itself with Zionism,
25 especially given the changing nature of both

1 Zionism and Judaism. Certainly, Zionism is a
2 core element to Jewish identity for many.

3 However, Zionism is not an ethnic or
4 ancestral trait. It is not intrinsic to Judaism
5 as a faith or culture. And those who claim that
6 it is are misunderstanding Judaism and
7 misrepresenting the diversity of Jewish people
8 and communities.

9 On our campuses, we have Jewish
10 students who strongly identify as Zionists,
11 Jewish students who strongly identify as anti-
12 Zionists, and many Jewish students who fall
13 somewhere in between. We also, of course, have
14 non-Jewish students who identify in these ways.

15 To care about Jewish life on campuses requires
16 an acknowledgement and appreciation of the vast
17 spectrum of perspective among Jewish and non-
18 Jewish students.

19 Third, finally, we wish to emphasize
20 that those organizations or leaders who claim to
21 speak in the name of all Jews in the United
22 States block the authorities to do so. In line
23 with American pluralism and respect for
24 individualism, no single organization has ever
25 been anointed or appointed to speak on behalf of

1 Jews in the United States.

2 Profound variation among Jews' views on
3 Zionism and Israel is just one component of the
4 diversity in Jewish life. Neither the
5 government nor any Jewish organization should be
6 in the position of telling Jews what is
7 intrinsic to their ancestry or identity.

8 Thank you very much.

9 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you very much. Our
10 next speaker is Shoshana Aufzien. If you're on
11 the line, please unmute yourself, and again, I
12 will cut you off a little after at three
13 minutes.

14 MS. AUFZIEN: My name is Shoshana
15 Aufzien, and I'm a sophomore at Barnard College
16 of Columbia University in the Jewish Theological
17 Seminary. It's well established that Columbia
18 and Barnard were the epicenter of the anti-
19 Israel movement that swept college campuses
20 nationwide. Demonstrations have now subsided.
21 The forces that animated them remain intact.

22 To my knowledge, not a single Columbia
23 faculty member was dismissed for facilitating
24 building occupation, obstructing campus access,
25 or condoning terror. Some, like Manan Ahmed,

1 who blocked Jewish and Israeli students from
2 entering the encampment, were promoted. Dozens
3 of encampment participants serve on critical
4 university bodies, chief among them Professor
5 Mahmood Mamdani, who sits in the committee on
6 academic freedom and tenure.

7 In December, Columbia's Antisemitism
8 Task Force released the latest report covering
9 incidents in the classrooms. An instructor
10 identified an Israeli student as a murderer.
11 Another told a Jewish student it's such a shame
12 where people survive in order to commit mass
13 genocide.

14 In a required course at the School of
15 Public Health, a lecturer informed 400 students
16 that Jewish donors laundered blood monies. The
17 task force issued federal recommendations, all
18 of which fell on deaf ears. Notably, Columbia
19 has yet to employ a single tenure -- tenure-
20 track Middle East studies professor who is not
21 avowed to be anti-Zionist.

22 In theory, MESAAS, Columbia's Middle
23 East, South Asian, and African Studies
24 Department, is open to all. In practice, its
25 climate is so antagonistic that Jewish students

1 declaring the major do so at their own peril.

2 Columbia markets its Institute for
3 Israel and Jewish studies and a new
4 international relations major at the School of
5 International Public Affairs, as viable
6 alternatives. But building parallel tracks
7 without reforming MESAAS risks entrenching a
8 separate but equal regime. Last year I enrolled
9 in a MESAAS course, the History of Zionism,
10 taught by Professor Joseph Massad, who
11 infamously lauded Hamas' October 7th massacre as
12 astounding and awesome. He assigned several
13 essays penned by Hamas, PFLP, terrorists. One
14 reading argued that female suicide bombers
15 should be commended for excelling in a
16 traditionally male-dominated field. Massad
17 propagated antisemitic conspiracies, including
18 the discredited Khazar theory denying Jewish
19 indigeneity to Israel. His comments range from
20 inaccurate to depraved.

21 At one point, he asked: Is burning
22 down a synagogue a hate crime or just arson?
23 Academic freedom protects controversial
24 scholarship. It does not permit discriminatory
25 harassment or incitement. Columbia's failure to

1 clarify this distinction affords Massad and his
2 colleagues impunity. In March 2025, the Trump
3 administration calls for an academic
4 receivership of MESAAS. This provision was
5 conspicuously absent from the settlement
6 agreement it brokered with Columbia in July.
7 Five of the seven members of the committee
8 tasked with honoring MESAAS are hostile toward
9 Israel. Not one of its February 2025th
10 recommendations addresses the allegations of
11 faculty misconduct.

12 Meanwhile, every (inaudible) as Edward
13 Said, professor of Modern Arab Studies, has a
14 track record of extreme anti-Israel activism and
15 antisemitism. Two were disciplined or dismissed
16 by their previous employers. Which begs the
17 question, why is Columbia offering them a second
18 chance? The university insists it's making
19 progress. It advertises service-level reform
20 while refusing to confront the source of the PR
21 crisis. Jewish and Israeli students continue to
22 pay the price of administrative complacency. We
23 deserve better. Thank you.

24 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much. Our
25 next speaker is Violet Barron.

1 If you can come off mute. You have
2 three minutes.

3 Is she on the line? Again, the name
4 was Violet Barron. Or Barron. It's two R's.
5 Okay. If not -- are you muted? Oh, she's not
6 on. Okay. We'll move on to the next speaker.

7 Joel Gordon, if you were on the line,
8 please unmute yourself. You have three minutes.

9 No, not here.

10 Cady Carr?

11 MR. GORDON: Can you hear me?

12 CHAIR GARZA: Oh.

13 MR. GORDON: Can you hear me now?

14 CHAIR GARZA: Yes. Are you Joel?

15 MR. GORDON: Yes.

16 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. You have three
17 minutes. Go ahead and begin.

18 MR. GORDON: Thank you so much.

19 Thank you for this hearing. I'm
20 Professor Joel Gordon, professor of History and
21 Middle East studies at the University of
22 Arkansas, where I've been teaching for over 20
23 years. I'm a Jewish faculty member, one of not
24 many, in what has become a deeply red state.
25 And the state at the forefront of legislation

1 passed in the guise of protecting Jewish
2 students from antisemitism, but which has, in
3 fact, elevated a particular Jewish nationalist
4 theology, Zionism, and a particular state,
5 Israel, into an untouchable privileged position.

6 In the past few years, Arkansas has
7 passed legislation compelling those engaged in
8 business, and this has been expended to
9 university matters, one, to swear that they
10 oppose nonviolent strategies, such as boycott,
11 divestment, and sanctions, against one
12 particular state. Two, that they must refer to
13 the occupied West Bank, a neutral legal
14 designation that is recognized internationally,
15 as Judea and Samaria, a designation proffered by
16 a particular religious political orientation.
17 And three, to legally define antisemitism as
18 specified by a self-appointed International
19 Holocaust Remembrance Association, which
20 conflates Jewish identity with Zionism and thus
21 equates criticism of Israel and even sympathy
22 for Palestinian self-determination and social
23 justice with antisemitism.

24 On my campus, a forum I organized to
25 explore the October 7th, 2023, attack on Israel

1 was banned. Specific course syllabi have been
2 solicited without explanation by the State
3 Bureau of Legislative Research and submitted, in
4 some cases, without faculty approval or
5 instructor's knowledge, by the university. Our
6 equal opportunity office, citing Title IX, has
7 ordered the removal of expressions of
8 Palestinian solidarity from office stores.
9 Presumptions of antisemitism that are belied by
10 years of teaching and mentoring and glowing
11 student and collegial evaluations have been
12 leveled and upheld by university bureaucrats and
13 state officials who are, frankly, either
14 ignorant of the issues at hand or seeking to
15 reinforce a partisan agenda.

16 We might charge such people with anti-
17 Palestinian, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim racism,
18 all as insidious as true antisemitism, which is
19 directed at a people, Jews, rather than a state,
20 Israel, even if that state claims to act on
21 behalf of a people. But the playing field is
22 hardly level and state intervention at my
23 institution is a root problem. It hovers over
24 what we can teach and how we can teach it. It
25 threatens to undermine the university as a place

1 for higher learning and for respectful
2 intellectual debate and disagreement, however
3 emotional, even upsetting, and just when we need
4 such discussion the most. Thank you again for
5 this hearing.

6 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you.

7 Cady Carr, are you on the line? If you
8 are, please unmute yourself. You have three
9 minutes.

10 MS. CARR: Can you hear me?

11 CHAIR GARZA: Yes. Go ahead.

12 MS. CARR: Okay. Thank you.

13 Hi, thank you for having me. My name
14 is Cady Carr. I'm a junior at Occidental
15 College, a small liberal arts school in Los
16 Angeles. I'm studying politics and religious
17 studies with a focus in Jewish studies. I'm the
18 great-granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor and
19 I've been involved with Jewish life since before
20 I could walk, attending temple, Hebrew School,
21 Sunday school, as well as a Jewish sleep-away
22 camp for ten summers.

23 From a young age, the Jewish
24 institutions I was raised in taught us about the
25 legacy of the Holocaust and the importance of

1 speaking out about injustice and trying to
2 change it. I've always understood this to mean
3 to speak out against injustice for all people,
4 not just my own. One thing I learned in college
5 about the Holocaust was that Germany took
6 inspiration for the Nuremberg laws, the laws
7 that legalized race discrimination in the Third
8 Reich, from Jim Crow laws in America, and that
9 they basically practiced their genocide
10 (inaudible) in German colonized media before
11 targeting, not just Jews, but communists,
12 asocials, disabled people, homosexuals, mixed
13 Afro-German people in the 1930s and '40s in
14 Germany.

15 Hate and oppression don't look the same
16 for every group. I'm not saying they do. What
17 I am saying is that the Jews do not stand alone
18 and we never have. It doesn't make our pain,
19 trauma, and fear any less real. But fighting
20 antisemitism is counterintuitive when the safety
21 of Jews comes at the expense of the safety of
22 others. Whether that's their right to live and
23 study in America or their right to speak,
24 criticize, and learn freely without fear.

25 I was one month into my freshman year

1 when October 7th happened. The day after, I
2 joined a group of other Jewish students and
3 professors to grieve the lives killed by Hamas.

4 The protests that happened afterward made me
5 uncomfortable. They represented a viewpoint I
6 had been primed to see as threatening. I felt
7 complicated about what people I knew were
8 saying. Through personal reflection and further
9 conversations with my peers over the years, who
10 do represent different viewpoints, my views have
11 evolved. They're still different, but they have
12 grown. For me, discomfort does not mean danger.

13 Danger means the antisemitic violence of a
14 targeted American cult in their synagogues.
15 Danger means swastikas in dorm rooms and neo-
16 Nazi marches and white nationalists appointed to
17 positions of power while the president claims to
18 protect American Jews.

19 If this administration was serious
20 about protecting Jewish students, which it
21 isn't, it would be serious about defending the
22 political, civil, and social rights of, not just
23 Jews, but everyone in the United States. The
24 federal government has co-opted a genuine
25 problem of campus antisemitism, not only to

1 advance the partisan agenda, but to roll back
2 due process in civil rights of other
3 historically marginalized communities while, at
4 the same time, defunding the Department of
5 Education in their civil rights office. An
6 institution that not only handles antisemitism
7 but other forms of discrimination as well.

8 I urge this Commission to take
9 seriously the right of free speech for Jewish
10 students in all and not use the IHRA definition
11 of antisemitism, which shouldn't be used to
12 adjudicate Title VI cases, as it wrongfully
13 conflates anti-Zionism with antisemitism.
14 Congress should pass the Antisemitism Response
15 Prevention Act, which would refund OCR,
16 establish a national coordinator to counter
17 antisemitism, and require Title VI coordinators
18 on campus, who are neutral resources for
19 students to express their concerns to and
20 receive information from. Thank you for having
21 me.

22 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker is Jake Rymer. If
24 you're on the line, you have three minutes.

25 MR. RYMER: Can you hear me?

1 CHAIR GARZA: Yes. Please, proceed.

2 MR. RYMER: Hello. My name is Jake
3 Rymer and I'm a Jewish third-year at the
4 University of Chicago majoring in the biological
5 sciences on the pre-med track. I was born and
6 raised in a conservative Jewish household in
7 South Florida to a father who was born in a
8 displaced persons camp in Germany in 1947 to two
9 adult Holocaust survivors. My Jewish identity
10 is vital to me and incredibly important to the
11 work and experiences I faced on campus. I'm
12 part of the last group of students who
13 experienced October 7th on campus.

14 In fact, I was only two weeks into my
15 college career when it happened. The Jewish
16 community at UChicago thought that our friends
17 and fellow students would rally to our support
18 after such atrocities, but it couldn't have been
19 further from the truth. In response to October
20 7th, students and individuals took a hateful and
21 antisemitic rhetoric to justify what Hamas did,
22 going so far as to compare the IDF to the KKK,
23 waving flags of Hezbollah and throwing rocks at
24 our Habad and Hillel, even explicitly calling us
25 dirty Jews and the K slur. The tension and

1 intimidation on campus largely inhibited our
2 ability to be openly Jewish and proud of our
3 heritage. I was personally followed, had
4 pictures taken of me, was harassed for simply
5 wearing my yarmulke, and was cornered in my dorm
6 by students claiming I had no concern for human
7 rights.

8 Over the course of the last year, we
9 have noticed that the size of protests have
10 shrunk, but the remaining people are the most
11 potent. In fact, some of the last notable
12 protests resulted in an altercation with a
13 police officer and the destruction of university
14 property. When these protestors are left
15 unchecked, it is not just the Jewish community
16 that is affected, but the general body. The
17 disturbances, antisemitic rhetoric, and
18 ignorantly hateful actions disrupt Jewish lives
19 and push our people into darkness once again.
20 We have been through this before and we will not
21 tolerate it passively again.

22 Although these incidents have
23 persisted, the University of Chicago has
24 responded better than most top universities.
25 They impose encampment policies regarding

1 overnight shelters on our main quadrangle as
2 well as noise policies during academic hours,
3 yet more can and should be done. Two months
4 ago, the International Holocaust Remembrance
5 Alliance's IHRA definition of antisemitism was
6 codified into the Chicago Municipal Code, an
7 effort I personally induced by drafting and
8 support. The University of Chicago should be
9 discussing adoption of this code and all other
10 top schools must follow suit.

11 These protests and the rhetoric have
12 gone unpunished because there exists no standard
13 definition for antisemitism. They knowingly
14 preach antisemitic and hateful rhetoric under
15 the glass shield of ignorance, ignorance towards
16 what consists of anti-Zionism versus so-called
17 -- antisemitism versus so-called anti-Zionism.
18 To reprimand this, universities must
19 additionally create antisemitism-specific
20 training modules for all administration,
21 faculty, and students. Everybody must
22 understand what antisemitism is, what it looks
23 like, and how hurtful it is to our community.

24 The Jewish people have survived
25 thousands of crises and have -- and we finally

1 have our own state, government, and a strong
2 network of allies and friends. Now, it's time
3 for us to fight back and we are in the best
4 position we've ever been. I fight because I
5 will not let the testament of my family and
6 their survival go to waste. The Jewish
7 community deserves to finally feel safe and the
8 current, most important step towards achieving
9 this goal is having universities across the
10 country and, later, the world adopt this
11 definition of antisemitism, provide education
12 for all those that are willing to participate.
13 Thank you for taking the time to listen.

14 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you.

15 The next person is Dr. Molly Dunn. Are
16 you on the line? If you could come off mute?
17 No? Okay.

18 Tyler -- the next person I have is
19 Tyler Coward. If you're on the line, please
20 come off mute. You have three minutes.

21 MR. COWARD: Hello.

22 CHAIR GARZA: Hi, Tyler. Go ahead.
23 You have three minutes.

24 MR. COWARD: Hello, Chair and
25 commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to

1 testify today. My name is Tyler Coward with --
2 I'm the lead counsel for government affairs at
3 the Foundation for Individual Rights and
4 Expression, or FIRE. FIRE is a national
5 nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to
6 protecting the free speech rights of all
7 Americans.

8 And Jewish students must be able to
9 participate fully in campus life free from
10 unlawful discrimination. Universities have both
11 a moral and legal obligation to address conduct
12 that denied students equal access to their
13 education. The question is not whether we
14 ensure campuses are free from hostile
15 environments for Jewish students, it is how.
16 Because this Commission's role is to evaluate
17 federal civil rights enforcement and advise
18 Congress and the president, I would respectfully
19 offer three areas for your consideration.

20 First, whether federal agencies are
21 adhering to procedural safeguards Congress built
22 into Title VI. Title VI provides not only
23 substantive protections for students and
24 faculty, but also a specific enforcement
25 process. Before federal funding may be

1 terminated, agencies must provide notice of
2 attempt, voluntary compliance, make an expressed
3 finding after a hearing, and report to Congress.

4 These safeguards ensure fairness, transparency,
5 and legitimacy.

6 And when agencies bypass statutory
7 procedure, even in pursuit of a goal they deem
8 worthy, courts are likely to intervene and
9 enforcement efforts may be delayed or
10 invalidated. Durable protection for Jewish
11 students requires enforcement that can withstand
12 judicial review. The Commission should evaluate
13 whether grant-making -- grant-making agencies,
14 including the Department of Education and its
15 office for civil rights, and the federal
16 antisemitism task force are complying with the
17 Title VI's procedural mandates and whether
18 federal -- oh, excuse me, whether the task
19 force's demands are appropriately tailored to
20 bring institutions into Title VI compliance.

21 Second, whether enforcement practices
22 clearly distinguish protected expression from
23 unlawful discriminatory harassment or other
24 unprotected speech. The Supreme Court addressed
25 this question in *Davis v. Monroe County Board of*

1 Education holding that student-on-student
2 harassment becomes actionable only when it is so
3 severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive
4 that it effectively denies equal access to
5 educational opportunities. That demanding
6 standard insures institutions act when conduct
7 crosses the line into discriminatory harassment
8 while preserving constitutional protection for
9 political and academic speech, including speech
10 that is controversial or even deeply offensive.

11 Collapsing that distinction risks chilling
12 lawful expression without meaningfully
13 addressing true discrimination.

14 Third, whether the incorporation of
15 vague or speech-focused definitions of
16 antisemitism into enforcement regimes creates
17 constitutional and practical risk. Where
18 definitions of antisemitism are indeterminate or
19 sweeping core political advocacy, institutions
20 predictably over-correct and avoid -- to avoid
21 investigation or funding laws. Courts have
22 begun to recognize this concern. In *Students*
23 *for Justice in Palestine v. Abbott*, a federal
24 district court concluded that the incorporation
25 of the International Holocaust Remembrance

1 Alliance's definition and examples of
2 antisemitism into university enforcement
3 guidance plausibly construed unconstitutional
4 viewpoint discrimination because it singled out
5 certain political criticisms of Israel as
6 indicative of antisemitism.

7 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you so much.

8 MR. COWARD: That litigation
9 illustrates the rift.

10 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 William Jacobson, are you on the line?

13 MR. JACOBSON: Yes, I -- yes.

14 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. You have three
15 minutes.

16 MR. JACOBSON: Yes.

17 Okay. I appreciate the opportunity to
18 provide testimony to the Commission and I
19 appreciate the fact that you have subjected this
20 topic to discussion. I am a clinical professor
21 of law at Cornell Law School. I am also the
22 president and founder of the Equal Protection
23 Project. I have studied antisemitism on
24 campuses, through my websites, going back close
25 to 20 years. This is not a new problem. This

1 is a problem which has developed over time and
2 is direct outgrowth of the International
3 Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement,
4 which started as an anti-Jewish boycott in the
5 British mandate.

6 Palestine morphed into an anti-Jewish
7 boycott from the Arab League. Many people think
8 of that as an anti-Israel boycott, but it
9 started as an anti-Jewish boycott even before
10 Israel became into being. It was then
11 repackaged at the turn of the century, in the
12 early 2000s, as a social justice movement,
13 because the boycott was failing. Everything
14 emanates from that. This is a concerted effort
15 to demonize Jews and anti-Zionism is now the
16 stalking force for that.

17 At the same time that the boycott of
18 Jews was repackaged as social justice, other
19 developments happened, on campuses, that made
20 matters worse. There has been a purge on
21 campuses at the faculty level of two groups.
22 The first is conservative. It is very difficult
23 to find an openly conservative professor,
24 certainly on any elite campuses, certainly on my
25 campus. I end up serving as the faculty advisor

1 to almost every right of center student group
2 because there literally is no other professor on
3 campus who will do it. And that's in a campus
4 with a faculty of over 2,000 faculty members.

5 At the same time, there had been a
6 purge of openly pro-Israel faculty. That's why
7 you find in Jewish study departments and you
8 find in Israel study departments near unanimity
9 of anti-Zionism and hostility to Israel. There
10 are no faculty voices or very few to speak up
11 for Jewish students on campuses, and that is a
12 profound problem. The campuses unfortunately
13 are incapable of reforming themselves because
14 there is no internal opposition left. And,
15 therefore, I applaud the Commission and I
16 applaud the Trump administration for subjecting
17 the campuses to scrutiny because they deserve it
18 and they cannot self-scrutinize and they cannot
19 self-reform. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 The next person that we have signed up
23 is Susan Radov Epstein. If you're on the line,
24 please unmute yourself and you can begin. You
25 have three minutes.

1 Okay. The next individual we have is
2 Ellen Feig. If you're on the line, please
3 unmute yourself and you --

4 MS. FEIG: Oh.

5 CHAIR GARZA: -- you have three
6 minutes.

7 MS. RADOV EPSTEIN: Can you hear me?

8 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, please begin.

9 MS. RADOV EPSTEIN: This is Susan Radov
10 --

11 MS. FEIG: Oh.

12 MS. RADOV EPSTEIN: Can you hear me?

13 CHAIR GARZA: Oh, I'm sorry. So we
14 have Susan on the line?

15 MS. RADOV EPSTEIN: Yes, I'm here. Can
16 you hear me?

17 CHAIR GARZA: Okay. Yes. Why don't
18 you go ahead and go? Three minutes.

19 MS. RADOV EPSTEIN: Great. Thank you.

20 My name is Susan Radov Epstein, director of
21 Jewish Resilience at the Anti-Defamation League.

22 Today, though, I am here to share my story as a
23 recent MBA student at Northwestern, post October
24 7th. Thank you for the opportunity to speak
25 today. For me, it started with, you are not

1 welcome here. In spring 2024, an anti-Israel
2 encampment formed on Northwestern Central quad,
3 Deering Meadow. I went over and asked what they
4 wanted the university to do. Instead of
5 answers, I was pressed about my identity. And
6 once I said I was a Jewish graduate student, I
7 was told I was not welcome as a Zionist and was
8 escorted out. That set the tone, not dialogue,
9 but exclusion, and it was not isolated.

10 According to ADL there were nearly
11 1,700 antisemitic incidents on college campuses
12 in 2024, an 84 percent increase from 2023. Once
13 the encampment emerged, I could not walk to
14 class without seeing posters of, "From the river
15 to the sea," a star of David with an X through
16 it, or a Jewish University president with devil
17 horns and the words, "I love genocide." And I
18 could not drown out chants of, "Hey, hey, ho,
19 ho. Israel has to go," and, "Long live the
20 intifada." One of my friends was spat at. I
21 was pushed and shoved outside of the Hillel.

22 An undergrad I know was told, "Go back
23 to Germany and get gassed." And signs
24 rebranding the IDF as, quote, "Israel Defense of
25 Ethnic Cleansing Forces," were personal to me

1 since my then fiance, now husband, served as a
2 lone soldier in the IDF. Even when we tried to
3 respond with Jewish (inaudible), we were
4 targeted. In April 2024, I organized a Jewish
5 solidarity stand next to the encampment, 300
6 people came with bagels and Israeli sags --
7 flags to be in community. We were smeared
8 online, though, as Zionist pigs and fascists and
9 told Zionists should be sent home.

10 After that spring, I submitted a 50-
11 plus-page report of documented antisemitism to
12 Northwestern's Office of Civil Rights. There
13 was no meaningful follow-up and no clear
14 accountability. That lack of response aligns
15 with ADL's survey data. 66.2 percent of Jewish
16 students are not confident in their university's
17 ability to prevent antisemitic incidents. And
18 in spring 2025 post encampment, we were hit with
19 vandalism. The Holocaust Study Center and
20 Jewish Studies building were spray-painted with
21 "Death to Israel," "Intifada now," the red-
22 inverted triangle, and River to the Sea.

23 For me, it started with Jewish
24 exclusion and ended with Israel erasure. To be
25 clear, this was not free speech, but rather

1 endangerment. As a graduate student, I spent so
2 much time managing antisemitic threats and
3 defending my identity. Today, I do that work
4 professionally at the ADL, protecting,
5 educating, and advocating for the Jewish people.

6 Students should not have to do that. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Ellen Feig. If
10 you're on the line, please unmute yourself.

11 MS. FEIG: Hello. Good morning.

12 CHAIR GARZA: Good morning. Three
13 minutes.

14 MS. FEIG: Thank you, Commissions, for
15 allowing me to speak. My name is Ellen Rosner
16 Feig and I am a professor of English at Bergen
17 Community College in New Jersey. Prior to
18 October 7th, teaching was not only my passion,
19 but my purpose. As a tenured 15-year faculty
20 member, I enjoyed a collegial atmosphere with my
21 colleagues and loved coming to work. However,
22 that changed after October 7th. The year after,
23 my Hillel students reported antisemitic
24 harassment and my colleagues and I drafted an
25 email to the faculty asking for their empathy

1 and support for the Jewish community at the
2 college. The response honestly shocked me. I
3 was met with hostile emails advising me and my
4 colleagues that we were one-sided and did not
5 consider the suffering of Gazans. My workplace
6 quickly changed as to one where I will be other.

7 I was told that I was biased, that my views as
8 a Jew, as a Zionist, did not meet the views of
9 many of my colleagues.

10 My values and principles were
11 challenged, my commitment to social justice for
12 decades dismissed. This targeted hostility has
13 always been delivered in the context of giving
14 the oppressed a voice and removing the voice --
15 sorry, excuse me, the voice from the oppressor,
16 now considered the Jew. As of September 2025,
17 ADL reported -- report noticed over 50.2 percent
18 of Jewish faculty have experienced what are
19 called shadow boycotts, where the college
20 refuses to sponsor Jewish or pro-Israel groups.

21 In my own experience, Jewish focused
22 programming is outwardly denied, without reason,
23 while other programs, including Muslim, Black,
24 and Asian programming, are welcomed and
25 publicized. What was once a place where

1 intellect and free thought thrive is now a place
2 where those who do not fit the current
3 narrative, i.e. that choose (inaudible)
4 oppressors that Israel is a colonizer, are
5 ostracized and slowly removed from college life.
6 Jewish (inaudible) faculty and our allies are
7 suffering. We are no longer welcome on the
8 campuses we helped to create. Thank you so much
9 for allowing me to testify.

10 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you.

11 Jeffrey Lax, if you're on the line,
12 please unmute. You have three minutes.

13 MR. LAX: Can you hear me?

14 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, we can hear you.

15 MR. LAX: Can you hear me?

16 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, we can hear you.

17 Please proceed. Three minutes.

18 MR. LAX: Sorry. Thank you,
19 commissioners. My name is Jeffrey Lax. I'm a
20 22-year professor and a 15-year department chair
21 at the City University of New York, CUNY. When
22 Congress members asked our chancellor, Felix
23 Rodriguez, why he hired Saly Abd Alla, an avowed
24 anti-Zionist, former chair director, and BDS
25 activist, to be the chief diversity officer in

1 charge of all discrimination at CUNY, he was
2 dishonest with her colleagues. He said that Abd
3 Alla, quote, "Had no responsibilities over cases
4 with students or faculty."

5 I can tell you firsthand that is not
6 true. I am a faculty member. Abd Alla was put
7 in charge of my antisemitism case. In April
8 2019, I was in the faculty dining room when five
9 antisemitic professors surrounded me and began
10 screaming at me incoherently. Twice I tried to
11 leave, but they physically stopped me. One
12 professor put his hand above my head and said,
13 we're not done. We're just getting started.

14 I didn't even know these professors,
15 but they somehow knew everything about me, that
16 I was Jewish, observant Zionist. One of them
17 admitted that they were actively Googling me
18 before we ever met. That professor was
19 previously found liable for telling a Jewish
20 student that if you want the religious
21 accommodation, quote, "He should have gone to a
22 Jewish school." These professors were a part of
23 a hateful faculty group that banned Orthodox and
24 Zionist Jews and met on Friday night so that I
25 and other observant Jews could not attend.

1 The EEOC vindicated my claims in 2021,
2 finding widespread antisemitism and direct
3 culpability of the president's office at my
4 college. Despite that, the chancellor and
5 president completely ignored every single one of
6 my many requests to discuss the EEOC findings
7 and how to address them. No action whatsoever
8 was ever taken. It will be five years since the
9 EEOC ruled in my favor this Sunday, nothing has
10 happened. The chancellor actually promoted the
11 president to a more prestigious campus after the
12 commission found her liable.

13 All of my discrimination complaints
14 against the chancellor and president have been
15 and continue to be ignored and -- I'm sorry.
16 And continue a violation of 2024 settlement with
17 the DOE's Office of Civil Rights. OCR found
18 that Abd Alla's office has ignored countless
19 antisemitism complaints. Her office continues
20 to ignore them. As of April 2023 in a city that
21 is 20 percent Jewish, all Jews have been
22 expunged from senior leadership roles at CUNY.
23 Among CUNY's top 70 leaders, CUNY purposely and
24 methodically eliminated every single Jew from
25 senior leadership. Five Zionist Jewish

1 professors, including me, have been placed under
2 investigation for filing antisemitism
3 complaints. This is systemic antisemitism.

4 As a law professor, antisemitism
5 expert, and longtime department chair with
6 extensive accreditation agency experience,
7 please let me help you fix this through making
8 simple reforms to accreditation guidelines and
9 by requiring universities to adopt a clear
10 definition of antisemitism. The fixes are
11 simple and require only moral clarity and a
12 desire to solve the problem. Let's do it
13 together.

14 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you for your
15 testimony. And thank you for everyone's
16 testimony. That was our last speaker that had
17 signed up that had registered to speak today.
18 Really appreciate all of your voices, we're --
19 we are very fortunate to have been able to hear
20 you today. So on behalf of myself and the rest
21 of the commissioners, again, thank you for your
22 time, for your experiences, for sharing them
23 with us today. If you did not have the
24 opportunity to speak or if you need to add
25 something or if I unfortunately had to cut you

1 off, please submit your written comments.

2 Written comments are going to -- are
3 accepted at asbriefing@usccr.gov. And I'll
4 repeat that again, asbriefing@usccr.gov. We
5 will accept those through March 20th of this
6 year. So this concludes our listening session
7 on Antisemitism on college -- on America's
8 College and University campus -- Campuses and I
9 hereby adjourn us at 2:03 p.m. Eastern time.
10 Thank you very much and have a great weekend.

11 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
12 went off the record at 2:03 p.m.)

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2 This is to certify that the foregoing transcript
3 was duly recorded and accurately transcribed
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5 transcript is a true and accurate record of the
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Michael Morris

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