

March 15, 2024

Dear Members of the House Committee on Education & the Workforce,

I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of the "Respecting the First Amendment on Campus Act," a crucial piece of legislation addressing pressing concerns regarding freedom of expression and viewpoint diversity on college and university campuses nationwide.

As an advocate for responsible governance, academic quality, and viewpoint diversity in higher education, the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal is deeply committed to ensuring that our academic institutions remain bastions of free speech and intellectual inquiry. However, recent trends indicate a troubling erosion of these fundamental principles within our institutions of higher learning.

The "Respecting the First Amendment on Campus Act" is essential because it reaffirms and protects the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, particularly on college campuses where the free exchange of ideas should be most vigorously upheld.

Too often, American colleges and universities restrict the essential First Amendment protections that all students and faculty should enjoy.

- Many colleges and universities have implemented restrictive "free speech zones," limiting where students and faculty can express their views. Such zones stifle discourse and restrict the exercise of constitutionally protected rights.
- Institutions have adopted overly broad and vague speech codes that subject students and faculty to disciplinary action for expressing viewpoints deemed controversial or offensive. These codes create a chilling effect on speech and inhibit academic freedom.
- Institutions have "disinvited" controversial speakers from presenting their perspectives on campus, undermining the principles of open dialogue and intellectual diversity.
- Institutions have discriminated against religious student groups, not allowing them to set their own standards for group membership and leadership. Such bias undermines the academic integrity and ideological diversity essential for a thriving educational environment.

The "Respecting the First Amendment on Campus Act" addresses these critical issues, providing much-needed guidance and protection for students, faculty, and guest speakers who seek to engage in open dialogue and robust debate without fear of censorship or reprisal.

As members of the House Committee on Education & the Workforce, you have a unique opportunity to champion this important cause and safeguard the foundational principles of our democracy. I hope you will carefully consider the "Respecting the First Amendment on Campus Act."

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 919-523-1765 or jarobinson@jamesgmartin.center.

Sincerely,



Jenna A. Robinson