

April 26, 2024

PIERCE STATEMENT ON THE UNWARRANTED ACTIONS OF THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION TO ARREST PEACEFUL PROTESTORS

INDIANAPOLIS – State Rep. Matt Pierce (D-Bloomington) released the following statement regarding the unwarranted actions of the Indiana University administration to arrest peaceful protesters:

"Yesterday, the Indiana University administration betrayed more than 50 years of support for free expression on campus by choosing to use force to shut down a peaceful protest and arresting students and faculty exercising their First Amendment rights.

"A University policy that has designated Dunn Meadow as a "public forum for expression on all subjects" since 1969 was blatantly violated by the leaders of the University without justification. A policy that has withstood anti-Vietnam War protests, months-long shanty towns to protest apartheid in South Africa, the Gulf War, and numerous other controversies was summarily changed by an unknown committee with no public notice or input.

"It's clear this alleged policy change was directly targeted at a specific protest with speech the University wished to suppress. That is a textbook violation of the First Amendment.

"It's ironic that University leaders who continually use the excuse of potential violence to suppress speech it opposes invited onto campus state police with military-style weapons that included what appeared to be snipers stationed on rooftops to force a physical confrontation with protesters. This reckless decision is indefensible. Does President Whitten not remember Kent State?

"President Whitten must correct this grievous violation of First Amendment rights by requesting all criminal charges against those arrested be dropped and rescinding any year-long bans from campus that have been issued against the protesters.

"It's time for President Whitten to put an end to her amateurish handling of campus protests before someone gets seriously hurt."