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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jewish Faculty Urge IU Administrators to “Stand Firmly” in Face of Government Funding Threats

(Bloomington, IN) A group of more than 30 Jewish Indiana University (IU) Bloomington faculty members has urged university leaders to “stand firmly for freedom of speech,” in the face of the Department of Education’s recent threat to cut federal funding to schools that fail to “protect Jewish students on campus.”

“We have all been ‘Jewish students on campus,’” the group wrote in an open letter delivered this morning to IU Board of Trustees Chair Quinn Buckner, President Pamela Whitten, and IU Bloomington Provost Rahul Shrivastav. “And we—unlike Gov. [Mike] Braun or Education Secretary Linda McMahon—have known antisemitism firsthand.” Still, the signers said, “our identities, both as Jewish Americans and as public university employees, require respect for free speech and tolerance of opposing viewpoints.”

The letter came in response to a message sent from Education Secretary McMahon to [IU and 59 other colleges or universities](#). In that message, the Department of Education threatened to withhold funding from schools found in violation of Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act, specifically in regard to “harassment and discrimination” directed against Jewish students. A [similar executive order](#), directed at Indiana’s public universities, followed from Indiana Governor Braun.

“Where we see harassment and discrimination practiced against Jewish members of the IU community, simply because of who they are, let’s call it out,” said IU Professor of History Eric Sandweiss, one of the letter’s signers. “But let’s not let politicians use our interests as Jewish Americans as a veil to cover their real goal, which is to weaken the role of universities as sites of open debate and, sometimes, dissent.” Sandweiss said that “IU has a 200-year history as a place to nourish free thinking. We want our university’s leaders to know that IU’s Jewish community is diverse, that we’re devoted to this school, and that we will have their back if they’re prepared to stand up to these kinds of threats.”

The letter cited controversy over IU’s actions following Israel’s military response to Hamas’s October 7, 2024, terrorist attacks—including the arrest of student and faculty protestors at Dunn Meadow and the suspension of Prof. Abulkader Sinno—as evidence that “censoring legal expression—even in the name of bringing us together—only tears us apart.”

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