

**BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Executive Committee Meeting  
Thursday, February 27, 2025  
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201), Fairfax Campus**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Michael Meese, Secretary Armand Alacbay, and Visitor Bob Pence.

**ABSENT:** None.

**ALSO, PRESENT:** Visitor Horace Blackman, Visitor Charles Cooper, Visitor Maureen Ohlhausen, Gregory Washington, President; Rachel Spence, Staff Liaison; Carolyn Faith Hoffman, Graduate Student Representative; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; and Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem.

**I. Call to Order**

Rector Stimson called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**A. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for December 5, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)**

Rector Stimson called for any corrections to the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for December 5, 2024, that were provided for review in the board meeting materials. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED AS WRITTEN**.

**III. Rector's Comments**

Rector Stimson announced that Governor Youngkin had appointed three new board members, two of whom were in attendance and had been sworn in that morning, Charles "Chuck" Cooper and Maureen Ohlhausen. He noted that the third new board member, Bill Hansen, was being sworn in that morning in Richmond.

**IV. President's Comments**

Rector Stimson recognized President Washington to offer comments. President Washington indicated he would also reserve his comments for the full board meeting.

**V. Board Self-Evaluation**

Rector Stimson recognized Gesele Durham to present on the board self-evaluation survey results. Dr. Durham provided an overview of the survey results, noting the following:

- The survey was sent to all board members, and received an 11/16 response rate, 69%.
- Respondents were generally positive on items measuring individual board member roles, with some concerns expressed about the volume and arrangement of meeting materials.
- Regarding meeting structure and effectiveness, concerns were expressed regarding information sharing, climate, and goal setting processes.
- She then outlined feedback specific to the board's standing committees:
  - APDUC: feedback noted an exceptional chair, strong participation, and good communication, with a desire to better prioritize topics for meetings.
  - Finance and Land Use: strengths included focused efforts on understanding the budget, dedicated committee members, and improved clarity. Areas for improvement included financial support for

- the Law School, need for clearer reporting on the budget, delivery of timely budget information, and requesting better context and prioritization of capital projects.
- Audit, Risk, & Compliance: Strengths included effective leadership from the chair and communication from Ed Dittmeier.
- Research: Strengths included collaboration between the chair and VP and valuable research from professors. It was requested for presentations at the full BOV meeting to be more strategic and concise and a need for greater knowledge in high-impact research and federal grant funding was expressed.
- Development: Strong leadership from the chair was cited. Concerns included the effectiveness of the head of development and a need for stronger leadership in fundraising.
- Board members indicated the following as the highest priority strategic issues, in priority order: financial sustainability, long-range planning, new academic offerings, and ensuring the success of the president.
- Board members noted the following ways that board effectiveness could be enhanced: greater transparency, maintaining separate committee meetings, using a consent agenda, asserting legal prerogatives, developing a long-term vision, continued campus visits, and increased collaboration.
- Members noted the following items to eliminate from discussion: debates about funding for the law school, DEI-related programs, and reduce Research Committee briefings to twice per year.
- Members expressed a desire to add the following discussion topics: strategic planning for West Campus, admissions policies and fundraising strategies, leveraging GMU's advantages compared to other regional institutions, and a long-term university vision.
- Additional information was requested on the following topics: detailed breakdown of DEI staffing, costs, and curriculum integration; fiscal impacts of tenure appointments and athletic coaching contracts; and trends in program enrollment and yield rate changes.
- Members noted the following ways the board can make its work more effective: increased social interactions, expand standalone committee meetings, and encourage board members to raise issues before meetings to allow staff to prepare.

## VI. Closed Session

- A. Gifts, Bequests, and Fundraising Activities (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.9)
- B. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- C. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)
- D. Personnel Matter (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.1)

Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the committee go into Closed Session under the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.A.9 for discussion on gifts, bequests, and fundraising activities to discuss a philanthropic naming opportunity; Section 2.2-3711.A.7 for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:

Akerman v. GMU  
Cerankosky et al. v. Washington, et al.  
Jeong v. GMU  
Morrison v. GMU et al.  
De Raspide Ross v. Mason  
Wright v. GMU et al.  
Zahabi v. GMU et al.

Section 2.2-3711.A.8 for Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice concerning the aforementioned and subsequent items and pending investigations; and

Section 2.2-3711.A.1 for a Personnel Matter, to discuss the performance of specific university personnel. The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacbay. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Following closed session, Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the committee go back into public session and further moved that by roll call vote the committee affirm that only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting, and that only such business matters that were identified in the motion to go into a closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting. Any member of the committee who believes that there was a departure from the requirements as stated, shall so state prior to taking the roll call, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place. **ALL PRESENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

## **VII. Adjournment**

Rector Stimson called for any additional business to come before the Executive Committee. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 8:54 a.m.

Prepared by:  
Scott Nichols  
Interim Secretary pro tem

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
AUDIT, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE  
OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS**

**February 27, 2025  
MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chair Oberoi, Vice Chair Alacbay, Visitors Blackman and Meese.

**PRESENT  
VIRTUALLY:** Visitor Brown.

**ALSO  
PRESENT:** Rector Stimson; Visitors Cooper, Ohlhausen, Pence, and Peterson; President Washington; Provost and Executive Vice President Antony; Vice President for Enrollment Management Burge; Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration Dickenson; Faculty Liaison Douthett; Special Advisor to the President Healy; Graduate Student Representative Hoffman; Vice President and Chief Information Officer Madison; Vice President for Research Marshall; Associate University Counsel Schlam; Faculty Senate President Simmons; Staff Senate Chair Spence; Vice President of Finance Stephens; Vice President for Facilities Strike; Director of Financial Reporting Sultana; Associate Vice President and Controller Klock-Taube; Executive Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff Walsh; Interim Senior Vice President and Chief Risk Officer Zobel; Chief Audit and Compliance Officer Dittmeier; Deputy University Auditor Butler; and Associate Vice President for Institutional Compliance Lacovara.

**I.** Chair Oberoi called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Chair Oberoi **MOVED** that the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee approve Visitor Brown's electronic participation in this meeting due to a personal matter. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Meese.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

**II.** **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Oberoi called for any corrections to the minutes of the November 19, 2024 Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee meeting. Hearing none, the **MINUTES STOOD APPROVED AS WRITTEN.**

### **III Old Business**

#### **A. Auditor of Public Accounts Examination Update**

Director of Financial Reporting Sultana briefed the Committee on the current status of the Auditor of Public Accounts' examinations.

- The agreed-upon procedures engagement of Intercollegiate Athletics' Statement of Revenues and Expenses required under NCAA Bylaws was completed in December 2024; there were no findings.
- The Auditor's procedures to support the Single Audit of the Commonwealth's compliance with requirements applicable to federal student financial assistance programs were completed in February 2025. The audit resulted in three findings. Detailed corrective action plans were provided to the Auditor; these action plans are expected to be completed by December 2025.
- The annual audit of the university's financial statements for the year-ended June 30, 2024 began in January 2025 and is expected to be completed for the Committee's May 2025 meeting. As of February 27, 2025, no potential findings have been communicated by the Auditor.

### **IV New Business**

#### **A. Competition Risk Update**

Provost and Executive Vice President Antony provided an overview of the high priority enterprise risk related to competition. He discussed the competitive landscape with a focus on the more than 50 universities with a presence in the DMV (District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia) area. Among other things, he noted the potential competitive impacts on student enrollment, particularly in graduate education where there might be programmatic overlap with other institutions. He discussed the monitoring of other universities by his office in collaboration with the Deans and plans to act proactively related to programmatic offerings, value propositions for students, competitive responses, and potential partnerships. He also discussed collaborative strategies for managing faculty and staff poaching that might occur.

The Committee discussed with Dr. Antony several aspects related to addressing competition, including: the contrasting nature of the risks associated with varied institutions with limited branch campuses in the District of Columbia and institutions with more fulsome offerings, including sister Virginia institutions; the potential for promising partnership opportunities with these institutions; the university's strengths in placing recent graduates in certain employment sectors; the ongoing need for continuing analyses of market segmentations, opportunities, and

strengths; and strategies to buttress the value proposition for faculty and staff, limiting susceptibility to potential poaching, including easing affordability and commute concerns through potential future campus development activities, investing more deeply in research infrastructure, and reducing bureaucracy where possible to make faculty work lives easier; among others.

It was also suggested that relevant management be briefed regarding competition and antitrust laws, particularly related to potential faculty and staff poaching activity and potential partnership activity.

The Committee also discussed the advantages of the university's programs with community colleges to streamline admissions and transfer experiences; pathways for easing undergraduates into graduate degree programs; brand recognition with the large number of graduates employed in companies in the region; and the collaboration with other organizations and companies leveraging the size and scale of the university's sponsored research programs and the ability to tailor graduate-level programs; among others.

## **V. Reports**

Chair Oberoi asked for the highlights of the reports received by the Committee to be discussed:

- Office of University Audit Summary Report.  
Mr. Butler reported that two reports and seven memos had been issued since the prior Committee meeting, and that multiple projects remain in progress. He also reported that the three investigations that had been in progress at the last Committee meeting were now completed.
- Enterprise Risk Management Program Summary Report.  
Dr. Zobel reported that action plan owners continue to make progress towards the mitigation strategies. The three top risks remain funding resources, competition, and cybersecurity.
- Office of Institutional Compliance Summary Report.  
Mr. Lacovara reported that action plans were progressing to address the compliance and ethics enterprise risk.
- Information Technology Risk and Control Infrastructure Program Update.  
Dr. Madison highlighted the report in the Committee's materials, including a recent review of Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act-related IT policies, the stand-up of two project governance teams, enhancements in change and configuration management, and processes for categorizing systems and developing security plans.

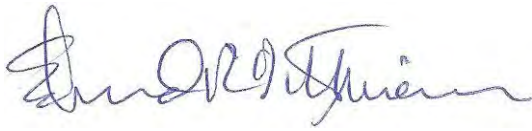
## **VI. Adjournment**

Chair Oberoi adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

**AUDIT, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**

February 27, 2025

Page 4

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Edward R. Dittmeier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edward" being the most prominent part.

Edward R. Dittmeier

Secretary pro tem

**George Mason University Board of Visitors**

**Development Committee Meeting**

**February 27, 2025**

**10:30 a.m. –11:25 a.m.**

**Merten Hall, Room 1201, Hazel Conference Room**

**MINUTES DRAFT – FOR COMMITTEE REVIEW**

**Attendees:** Chairman Jon Peterson, Visitor Robert “Bob” Pence, Visitor Dolly Oberoi, Visitor Reginald “Reg” Brown (virtual participation)

**Absent:** Vice Chair Anjan Chimaladinne

**Guests:** Rector Charles “Cully” Stimson; Vice Rector Michael J. Meese; Secretary Armand Alacbay; Visitor Horace Blackman; Visitor Lindsey M. Burke; Visitor Maureen Ohlhausen; Visitor Jeffrey A. Rosen; Visitor Charles Cooper; Visitor Nancy Gibson Prowitt; Anne Gentry, Legal Counsel; President Gregory Washington; Vice President Trishana E. Bowden; Susan Allen; faculty representative; Rachel Spence, staff liaison; Carolyn Faith Hoffman, student representative; Nicole Pozinsky, secretary pro-tem; and guest speakers Brian Drummond, Marvin Lewis and Darius Maddox.

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Jon Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

Peterson expressed that Visitor Brown wanted to participate electronically due to a personal matter. He took a vote, and the motion was PASSED.

**IV. Approval of Development Committee Meeting Minutes from December 5, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)**

Peterson confirmed the committee meeting had reached a quorum. He called for any changes or edits to the December 5 meeting minutes. There being no corrections, the minutes were **APPROVED AS WRITTEN**.

Peterson called to the podium Brian Drummond, secretary for the Board of Trustees for George Mason University Foundation (“foundation”), who delivered an update regarding recent foundation and Board of Trustees activities.



## **IIV. New Business**

### **A. GMUF Secretary for the Board of Trustees – Brian Drummond**

Drummond began by stating that at the end of January, a group of representatives attended the foundation leadership forum hosted by the Association of Governing Boards. On the evening of February 6, the trustees had the opportunity to spend some time with Provost Anthony. The foundation is currently in its winter board cycle, which finishes with its upcoming full board meeting in the first week of March. The seven committees focused on the following.

The **Advancement and University Priorities Committee** continues to demonstrate strong leadership through active engagement and philanthropic support. Committee members serve as ambassadors across various schools, colleges, and units through advisory board participation and representation at university and community events. The committee is strategically focusing on cultivating connections to support campaign initiatives. Board participation in the campaign currently stands at 84% with efforts underway to achieve 100% participation by April 3.

The **Audit Committee** reviewed the fiscal year 2024 tax filings, including the forms 990 and 990-T. These comprehensive informational and tax filings reflect well on the foundation, its governance, and fiscal stewardship. The committee also discussed the Foundation's continuing enterprise risk management process.

The **Finance and Real Estate Committee** reviewed the mid-year financial results compared to budget. Revenue and expenditures are in line with budget expectations. The Committee performed its annual review of the foundation's long-term debt obligations and insurance coverage.

The **Investment Committee** received the annual report on the Montano Student Managed Investment Fund. The fund returned a positive 29.05% for the 2024 calendar year, compared to their benchmark, the S&P 500, of a positive 25.71%. The presentation by the students highlighted sector allocation by weight, past performance analysis, risk and return analysis, and sector contribution to portfolio volatility.

The committee reviewed the mid-year investment portfolio results. CornerStone Partners provided an endowment portfolio and performance update. The endowment returned 6.9% through December 31st and is currently valued at approximately \$238M. In addition to covering results and asset allocation details, CornerStone Partners led a discussion on private investments.

The restricted portfolio returned 4.2% through December 31st.

The **Nominating and Governance Committee** reviewed nominations for new trustees for fiscal year 2026. The committee advanced 12 candidates for approval by the Full Board, pending interviews and the candidates' acceptance of the nomination. We continue to work to fill board needs in the areas of expertise and a broader representation across George Mason's colleges and schools.

### **Trustee Engagement**

Trustee Butler has issued an inspiring challenge to George Mason community through his company, Technatomy, with a generous \$50,000 gift to the Military, Veterans, and Families Initiative (MVFI) in December. Butler aims to motivate others to match his contribution. His personal story and commitment to veterans' causes will be highlighted during Mason Vision Day on April 3.

Drummond shared Butler's story and emphasized that he continues to champion MVFI through his active leadership - —recently attending a roundtable discussion and planning a future gathering focused on mental health support.

Peterson asked Drummond for a brief explanation of what the George Mason University Foundation does.

Drummond explained that the foundation is the financial backbone of the university. It includes volunteers from various areas of the community and real estate investment and athletics. The foundation goes into the community to find people who want to be part of George Mason and who wish to support it.

## **B. University Advancement and Alumni Relations – Vice President Trishana E. Bowden**

Vice President Trishana E. Bowden introduced Marvin Lewis, the assistant vice president and director of Intercollegiate Athletics. She noted that approximately a year ago, Lewis presented to the Development Committee and has returned to share the Athletics case for support.

## **C. Athletics Update – Marvin Lewis, Assistant Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics**

Peterson asked Lewis to share a brief overview of his background with the new members in the room.

Lewis narrated the following series of PowerPoint slides (24 slides)

1. Intercollegiate Athletics Update – TITLE SLIDE
2. Agenda
3. Student-Athlete “Spotlight”
4. Darius Maddox – Men’s Basketball
5. Athletics Strategic Plan: Playbook of Greatness
6. Athletics Strategic Plan: The Process and Framework
7. Athletics Strategic Plan: Mission Statement
8. Athletics Strategic Plan: Purpose Statement
9. Athletics Strategic Plan: Core Values
10. Priorities, Goals, and Objectives
11. Video
12. Athletics Case for Support
13. Mason Athletics Now: Power the Possible
14. Power Basketball Greatness: Competitive Comparison – Conference
15. Power Basketball Greatness: Talent Recruitment and Development
16. Build and Modernize – Student-Athlete daily travel experience
17. Build and Modernize- Basketball and Academic Performance Center
18. Power Patriot Pathways: From Champion to Career
19. Power Sports Performance Ecosystem
20. Power New Opportunities
21. Power a New Mason Athletics – Join our Journey
22. Power a New Mason Athletics- Vision for the Future
23. How Can You Help Us...Power the Possible?
24. Questions – FINAL SLIDE

Lewis shared two significant initiatives: the athletics strategic plan and the fundraising case for support. Before discussing the key initiatives, Lewis emphasized that his north stars are our student-athletes—“students are why we do this work.” He introduced one of Athletics' brightest stars, Darius Maddox, a senior on the basketball team.

Maddox shared that he was raised in Bowie, Maryland, and was recruited by Division I programs, ultimately choosing Virginia Tech. After a couple of successful years at Virginia Tech, some personal and family issues led him to transfer programs to a more inclusive and close-to-home environment, ultimately choosing George Mason. In May 2025, Maddox will graduate with a bachelor’s in art and integrated studies with a concentration in social justice. As a student-athlete, Maddox hopes to continue to use his platform to be a positive influence.

Lewis asked if there were any questions for Maddox. Visitor Blackman lightheartedly asked what the plan is for VCU next time and stated that Darius did not need to answer the question.

Lewis continued to discuss the strategic plan for the Athletics Department: the mission is to inspire and transform lives through the power of sports. The strategic plan is not

just about winning titles. It is about winning hearts and minds, sparking ambition and saving lives. The goal of the strategic plan is to unite communities through support and resources. He showed a two-minute video about the strategic plan for Intercollegiate Athletics.

Lewis asked if there were any questions about the strategic plan before moving forward to the case for support.

Visitor Prowitt stated that the video was great and noted that these efforts will not only bring in recruits but also money and opportunities for the University to get the greatest bang for its buck and visibility in championship teams.

Chairman Peterson commented that if you look around the country at the elite universities, you will find a combination of great athletics and great academics. We have the academic side we just need to bring the other side up to match. There are a lot of young adults who go to a school so that they can go and watch or participate in the athletic program. Peterson noted that he is unsure if there are many students who come to George Mason because of our athletics programs, and we have an opportunity to change that.

Visitor Blackman commented that Athletics does not give themselves enough credit for what they have, and he gives them an enormous amount of credit for their efforts. The only difference between what he saw at a recent visit to Duke and what he sees here is infrastructure and money. He emphasized that the guts of what Mason does are in the same league; we just don't have the infrastructure or the money. The nucleus of what we need to do is already here.

Lewis thanked Blackman for his comments and went on to discuss his four priorities for the case for support.

- Basketball Greatness: since basketball represents George Mason's most visible programs, he wants to see them compete in the NCAA Tournament.
- Patriot Pathways Program: programming to educate student-athletes outside the classroom in life skills, financial education, and leadership development, to better compete with elite institutions like Maryland or Georgia Tech for athletes.
- Sports Performance Ecosystem
- A.D. Opportunity Fund

Lewis discussed how now the basketball program is spread between six locations across campus for athletic training, sports medicine, academic resources, the locker room, classes, and eating and activities. This puts the program at a competitive disadvantage for recruiting. He reiterated why the new basketball and academic performance center will be beneficial and will play an integral part in the success of student athletes and the basketball program. \$15 million needs to be raised. Lewis said that he is building a team of development staff members to help build relations and connect with potential donors.

Lewis listed six areas that are vital in building the Patriot Pathways program.

- Academic excellence
- Life skills
- Leadership development
- Well-being and belonging
- Career readiness
- Civic engagement

Lewis said that he wants to ensure that every student athlete has an internship or a traditional student abroad experience. A vision that Lewis has is to create an international service trip where 40 or 50 student-athletes across all sports go abroad from 7 to 10 days, then come back and be able to tell people about their experience. Opportunities like that will cost anywhere from \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year.

Lewis talked about two areas where the program sees the largest gaps: mental health and nutrition. Currently, he said, Intercollegiate Athletics does not have a nutritionist. With 500 student-athletes focused on peak performance, you have to have an expert making sure they are eating right and taking care of their bodies, he said. From a mental health perspective, Intercollegiate Athletics has a great relationship with Counseling and Psychological Services on campus, however, there are 1.5 staff members supporting athletics. The industry average is one mental health counselor for 150 student-athletes. They need another two or three mental health counselors to support George Mason's student-athletes. Lewis described the student-athletes' stresses: in addition to the day-to-day concerns of being a student, a basketball player's wins and losses are on TV, and his successes and failures on social media. The student-athletes are telling the Athletics Department that these are priorities for them, and the university wants to take care of them.

Lastly, Lewis discussed the A.D. opportunity fund. He wishes to secure resources so he can put dollars into practice create a competitive advantage, and take advantage of opportunities to partner with other units on campus. He wants to leverage George Mason's campus and regional expertise. He discussed how Intercollegiate Athletics intends to bring the program from good to great. The total goal for the Athletics Department's fundraising case for support is \$35 million. Traditionally, he said, athletics represents 10 to 20 percent of any university fundraising campaign. \$35 million is not 10 percent to 20 percent. Lewis stated his belief that we can not only get there but that we need to exceed this \$35 million number to take the program from being good to great. Not just great for one year, but consistently.

Lewis concluded by stating their vision and purpose, which is to empower transformational experiences and to power a championship culture and community. The purpose is to unite communities. Lewis emphasized how great George Mason student-athletes are, using Maddox as an example. He reported that this past fall, the Athletic Department had a 3.32 GPA. They had 78 Provost Scholars, ten more than what they'd had in the past (Provost Scholars have earned a 3.75 GPA or better). Fifty percent of student-athletes were on the Dean's list. George Mason student-athletes are getting it done in the classroom, he said.

Lastly, he concluded, Mason Nation needs to give. The evolving landscape of intercollegiate athletics is only getting more challenging. Resources are not just a hope; they are an

expectation. We have to fundraise and generate more revenue to support these student-athletes. He closed by asking for people to give and then opened the floor to any questions.

Rector Stimson commented that there are a lot of visitors on the board who either were college athletes or are parents of college athletes. One of the main takeaways from their tour of West Campus was their negative reaction to the Field House. He offered kudos to the program's success despite the Field House which does not have air conditioning. He asked what the new Field House is going to cost.

Lewis responded that it would be \$750,000 to \$100 million.

Visitor Blackman commented that it's not just about a field house. When visiting Duke, he took notes on what it looked like, and he appreciated what they did in terms of track and field. There were seven stadiums and facilities right there. There was a five-story building that was dedicated to athletics. There were two levels of study halls. There is a lot of support for students there. If we are going to go to the NCAA and build a sustainable infrastructure for championship-level athletics, that is the benchmark, not the pie in the sky.

Visitor Pence commented that he would like to address this from the point of view of a grandparent of three recruited D1 athletes and one D3. The oldest was recruited to play for the women's lacrosse team in Colorado. She fell her senior year, and within 15 minutes, the health facility knew she had a torn ACL, and they could immediately start doing what they needed to do. He continued by stating that these kids and their parents know what these athletic facilities are like, which is a material consideration in where they go to school. Pence also shared that he has a grandson who was recruited to play baseball at Roanoke. The Roanoke baseball facility makes our facility look like a mudflat. It doesn't make recruiting impossible, but it makes it extremely difficult. He stressed the importance of the student athletic experience, even for the kids who don't play – for the students who go and watch those games, is infectious and makes everyone want to attend. We need to elevate our games to that level. Student-athletes should get the best mental and physical health and conditioning.

Peterson commented that we can do better and we need to execute. He thanked Lewis for putting together a plan and believes that we are in the right position to support athletics better in the future than what was done in the past.

#### **IIIV. Old Business**

Peterson called for any topics of "Old Business" to be discussed. There were none.

#### **IVV. Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, Peterson adjourned the meeting at 11:32 a.m.

**BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Full Board Meeting  
Thursday, February 27, 2025  
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201), Fairfax Campus**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Mike Meese, Secretary Armand Alacbay, Visitors Horace Blackman, Reginald Brown (virtual), Lindsey Burke, Charles Cooper, Dolly Oberoi, Maureen Ohlhausen, Bob Pence, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, and Jeff Rosen.

**ABSENT:** Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne and Bill Hansen.

**ALSO, PRESENT:** Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Maria Cuesta, Undergraduate Student Representative; Carolyn Faith Hoffman, Graduate Student Representative; Rachel Spence, Staff Liaison; Gregory Washington, President; Gesele Durham, Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning; Amarda Shehu, Associate Vice President of Research and Chief AI Officer; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; and Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem.

**I. Call to Order**

Rector Stimson called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

Rector Stimson informed the Board that Visitor Brown requested to participate remotely due to a personal matter, more specifically, for travel outside the DC region to attend a special event honoring a longtime family friend.

Citing the board's Electronic Meeting Participation policy, Rector Stimson **MOVED** to approve Visitor Brown's electronic participation in the meeting. The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese. The **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Rector Stimson then welcomed Rachel Spence, who was recently elected as Chair of the Staff Senate, and accordingly now served as the Board of Visitors Staff Liaison. He also welcomed Bridget Higgins, Mason's new Executive Coordinator to the Board of Visitors and Secretary pro tem.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**A. Full Board Meeting Minutes for December 5, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)**

Rector Stimson called for any corrections to the Full Board Meeting Minutes for December 5, 2024, that were provided for review in the board meeting materials. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED AS WRITTEN.**

**III. Rector's Report**

**A. View from the Bridge**

Rector Stimson noted several items:

- Thanked Dr. and Mrs. Washington for hosting the annual holiday reception at the Mathy House.
- Noted the Winter Graduation ceremony, where Maureen Scalia received an honorary degree and he praised the remarks made by the graduation speaker, George Schindler of CGI.
- He shared that he and Dr. Washington had met and communicated regularly since the previous board meeting.
- Vice Rector Meese met with the Graduate and Professional Student Association general assembly to discuss the role of the Board of Visitors and answer questions.
- He attended a prep meeting for the Finance & Land Use Committee with committee chair Bob Pence and Deb Dickenson, EVP for Finance and Administration.

- Noted the APDUC and Finance & Land Use committee meetings that occurred on February 13 and the value of holding committee meetings before the full board meeting day, noting their potential to save time on full board days. He encouraged non-committee members to view the meeting recordings online in advance of full board meetings.
- On February 13, the Scalia Law School hosted the *Scalia Dialogue*, where Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett engaged with Visitor Brown, Eugene Scalia, and a former law clerk of Justice Barrett.
- He expressed disappointment that the Virginia General Assembly did not confirm four board members, despite their qualifications and distinguished service: Kenneth Marcus, Marc Short, Farnaz Thompson, and Nina Rees. He noted that this decision negatively affects the university, board, leadership team, and community. He emphasized that board members serve as volunteer advocates, playing key roles in fundraising, networking, and representing the university to state and federal governments. He cautioned that it may discourage future board member service due to fears of "petty politics" (as noted by Governor Youngkin). He concluded by thanking the former members for their service and friendship.
- He shared that the Governor had appointed three new board members, with a fourth appointment being imminent.
  - He introduced Charles "Chuck" Cooper as one of the most distinguished attorneys in the country, having clerked for Justice William Rehnquist, served in the Justice Department as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights division and as Assistant Attorney General for the office of Legal Counsel. He was a partner at two law firms before founding his own firm, Cooper & Kirk. Visitor Cooper thanked Rector Stimson for his comments and noted he looked forward to working with the board's distinguished members.
  - He then introduced Maureen Ohlhausen as an attorney and partner at Wilson Sonsini in the Antitrust and Competition division, having previously served on the Federal Trade Commission, including as Acting Chairman. She clerked on the DC Circuit Court, has been an adjunct professor at Scalia Law School, where she also received her law degree. Visitor Ohlhausen thanked Rector Stimson and shared she looked forward to supporting Mason.
  - He spoke to the appointment of William D. Hansen, who could not be present. Visitor Hansen was the Deputy Secretary of Education under President George W. Bush, as well as working in the Department of Commerce and Department of Energy. He is now the President and CEO of Building Hope, a nonprofit for charter school facilities, finance, and services. He is also a graduate of Mason.
- He noted several reminders for the board members and encouraged attendance where appropriate:
  - March 27: Opening of the Life Sciences and Engineering Building.
  - April 1: Board meeting to include public comment session on tuition and continuing education session.
  - April 17: Board committee meetings.
  - April 25: Hylton Performing Arts Center 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala.

#### **B. Board of Visitors Meeting Schedules**

1. Schedule for 2025-2026
2. Schedule for 2026-2027

Rector Stimson pointed to the proposed meeting schedules in the meeting materials and asked board members to review these schedules and provide their feedback to him and board staff, noting the vote for approval would take place at the May 1 meeting.

#### **C. Board Self-Evaluation**

Rector Stimson turned to the board self-evaluation, noting it was required to be completed every two years. He recognized Gesele Durham to present on the survey results. Dr. Durham provided an overview of the survey results, noting the following:

- The survey was sent to all board members, and received an 11/16 response rate, 69%.



- Respondents were generally positive on items measuring individual board member roles, with some concerns expressed about the volume and arrangement of meeting materials.
- Regarding meeting structure and effectiveness, concerns were expressed regarding information sharing, climate, and goal setting processes.
- She then outlined feedback specific to the board's standing committees:
  - APDUC: feedback noted an exceptional chair, strong participation, and good communication, with a desire to better prioritize topics for meetings.
  - Finance and Land Use: strengths included focused efforts on understanding the budget, dedicated committee members, and improved clarity. Areas for improvement included financial support for the Law School, need for clearer reporting on the budget, delivery of timely budget information, and requesting better context and prioritization of capital projects.
  - Audit, Risk, & Compliance: Strengths included effective leadership from the chair and communication from Ed Dittmeier.
  - Research: Strengths included collaboration between the chair and VP and valuable research from professors. It was requested for presentations at the full BOV meeting to be more strategic and concise and a need for greater knowledge in high-impact research and federal grant funding was expressed.
  - Development: Strong leadership from the chair was cited. Concerns included the effectiveness of the head of development and a need for stronger leadership in fundraising.
- Board members indicated the following as the highest priority strategic issues, in priority order: financial sustainability, long-range planning, new academic offerings, and ensuring the success of the president.
- Board members noted the following ways that board effectiveness could be enhanced: greater transparency, maintaining separate committee meetings, using a consent agenda, asserting legal prerogatives, developing a long-term vision, continued campus visits, and increased collaboration.
- Members noted the following items to eliminate from discussion: debates about funding for the law school, DEI-related programs, and reduce Research Committee briefings to twice per year.
- Members expressed a desire to add the following discussion topics: strategic planning for West Campus, admissions policies and fundraising strategies, leveraging GMU's advantages compared to other regional institutions, and a long-term university vision.
- Additional information was requested on the following topics: detailed breakdown of DEI staffing, costs, and curriculum integration; fiscal impacts of tenure appointments and athletic coaching contracts; and trends in program enrollment and yield rate changes.
- Members noted the following ways the board can make its work more effective: increased social interactions, expand standalone committee meetings, and encourage board members to raise issues before meetings to allow staff to prepare.

Rector Stimson noted that he, Visitor Blackman (as former rector), and Vice Rector Meese would discuss the findings and ways of improving board processes. Solon Simmons asked if non-voting board participants were included in the self-evaluation process, to which Dr. Durham replied that it was only distributed to board members. Dr. Simmons then asked if there was interest in engaging the faculty, staff, and students to contribute to the process. Rector Stimson responded in the affirmative, and asked Dr. Durham if SACS COC or SCHEV would allow for that. She responded that there was nothing that prohibited that type of engagement. Rector Stimson also noted a desire for future survey to include the specific timeline for which the survey covered.

#### **IV. President's Report**

Rector Stimson recognized President Washington for his report. President Washington reported the following:

- Graduated the largest class in the university's history and enrolled the largest, most academically competitive incoming class. He noted a slight decline in graduate enrollment of 1.1%, largely due to national graduate enrollment trends.
- Achieved leading online rankings, with Mason ranking in 9 of 13 categories—the highest among Virginia institutions.

- The preliminary reconciled budget from the General Assembly is highly favorable for Mason, potentially marking the best budget year ever, pending its passage.
- Research expenditures are on an upward trend, underscoring a thriving research enterprise.
- It may be a challenge to meet the year's \$110 million fundraising goal, but noted that the current number of \$40.3 million does not include several large gifts that were recently received, and that most large gifts tend to be made in the spring. He further noted that Mason has raised over \$100M annually five times in its history, with four of those years being within the last five years. He commended the efforts of the Advancement staff.
- He spoke to the impact of recent executive orders:
  - Roughly 25 executive orders potentially affecting George Mason.
  - The orders that affect Mason are divided into three categories:
    - DEI
    - Country of origin (to include immigration status and foreign aid support)
    - Government agency restructuring
  - A comprehensive compliance review is underway, including revising website language to ensure consistency with programs and Mason's institutional values. He noted that Mason leadership believes Mason is currently compliant, and has been for the last year. He further noted the need to review language in programs and initiatives aligns with what those programs and initiatives actually do.
  - Going forward, Mason intends to "play the long game" by establishing systems to prepare for future executive orders rather than only reacting to current ones. It will also be important to expand external partnerships that support Mason, and to be prepared for constant change and work quickly and collaboratively to respond.
- "Grand Challenge" problems represent the most critical needs of the planet and our society and areas where the university will allocate its limited funding.
  - Six key grand challenges have been identified to drive the university's future research and impact:
    - Advancing 21st-century education for all.
    - Building a climate-resilient society.
    - Driving responsible digital innovation and sustainable cyberinfrastructure.
    - Improving human health, well-being, and preparedness.
    - Pioneering space exploration, research, and collaboration for humanity.
    - Strengthening peace, trust, and engagement in democracy.
  - Planned investments total \$15 million over the next five years to support talent, projects, seed funding, and necessary infrastructure.
- He then spoke to the recent *House v. NCAA* settlement relating to student athlete compensation and how it impacts Mason.
  - The settlement requires a 10-year payment schedule for back damages of \$2.8 billion across all NCAA institutions. This amounts to \$400,000 each year for Mason, totaling \$4 million. Going forward, institutions are required to share revenue with student athletes.
  - For Division I institutions, there is a revenue-sharing cap of about \$20.5 million per institution, broken down approximately as follows:
    - 70% for football (not applicable to Mason).
    - 15% for men's basketball.
    - 10% for women's basketball.
    - 5% for all other sports.
  - Specific estimates include an additional \$1 million in compensation for men's basketball this year, potentially rising to about \$3 million over the next three years. Overall additional athletic costs for all Mason sports expected to reach between \$7–9 million over three years.
  - Adjustments in coaching salaries are also under consideration to retain top coaching talent.
  - Emphasized the importance and benefit of opting into this process, which is required for retaining Division I status.

- Provided an overview of key elements of Mason’s long-term planning vision, *Mason 2050*.
  - Mason will be a fully vertically integrated university meeting the needs of an evolving DC, Maryland, and Virginia region while actively mitigating global grand challenges. This includes redesigning the Fairfax campus, expanded residential components at Mason Square, and a community-integrated SciTech Campus.
  - The long-range vision aims to grow the student body to approximately 45,000 on-campus students, plus an additional 15,000–20,000 online students.
  - Key capital projects include:
    - Renovating EagleBank Arena to upgrade locker rooms, training facilities, and event spaces.
    - Constructing a pedestrian bridge across Ox Road at University Drive.
    - Developing a Living-Learning Village, likely integrated with the Costello College of Business, to alleviate student housing shortages.
    - Expanding faculty housing at the Science and Technology Campus.
    - Renovating Vernon Smith Hall at Mason Square to provide more affordable housing for students.
    - Upgrading athletic facilities with plans for a high-performance training center, a redesigned baseball field, and a redesigned Center for the Arts.
  - Detailed planning sessions are scheduled with board members over the coming month to review project estimates and timelines.

Discussion ensued:

- Carolyn Hoffman asked about the Law School’s webpage on DEI being taken down. President Washington responded that while programs were being reviewed, the original webpages had been taken down as a precautionary step, and that once they were updated, they would be put back online.
- Visitor Rosen asked if the plan was for the university to comply with the recent executive orders in order to protect federal funding. President Washington responded that upon a cursory review, it is believed that Mason is compliant. He continued that if noncompliance was found, then plan was to utilize the outlined mechanisms to bring them into compliance.
- Visitor Peterson commented that Mason was fortunate to own nearby land, which provides options and opportunities. He recommended establishing some initial ground rules for the land early on, in order to be more unified and prevent “false starts” during later stages of potential projects.
- Vice Rector Meese asked how the proposed capital projects aligned with the Strategic Plan that was approved two years prior. President Washington responded that the Strategic Plan outlined the flexibility to accomplish projects of this nature, and that these projects do not represent a change to the plan.
- Visitor Prowitt emphasized that these projects are investments for the future.
- Visitor Blackman remarked that Mason is far behind the market when it comes to investments in athletics. Citing Visitor Prowitt’s comments about investing for the future, he noted that when Mason went to the Final Four in 2006, the athletics budget was \$11 million, but the economic return on that accomplishment was around \$700 million.

## **V. AI Update**

Rector Stimson recognized Amarda Shehu, Associate Vice President of Research and Chief AI Officer to provide an update on Mason’s AI initiatives. Along with Charmaine Madison, Vice President and CIO, Dr. Shehu reported the following:

- Mason’s AI Taskforce, launched in Fall 2024, consists of over seventy members, bridges academic and non-academic units, and brings together faculty, students, and staff to guide the future of the university in all aspects of our AI Strategy
- Emphasized the institution's holistic approach to integrating AI across student outcomes, faculty outcomes, and operational efficiencies and outlined the guiding principles for AI use.
- Introduced four AI initiatives at Mason:

- **Integrate AI:** A strategic partnership with Microsoft and Cloud Force to embed AI capabilities throughout the institution. Described plans to build a robust AI ecosystem by establishing foundational security measures, providing a comprehensive AI toolkit, and promoting AI literacy among users. Emphasized that the platform's secure and scalable design will support accessible and high-performance AI services.
- **Inspire with AI:** Advance AI literacy as a core university outcome for all students, faculty, and staff. Noted that one AI course has been operational since 2024 and a pilot course for building AI agents is scheduled for 2025. Mason currently offers more than 100 active core and interdisciplinary AI-related courses across its colleges and schools.
- **Innovate AI:** Positions Mason as a leader in AI research and innovation, and provided examples of high-impact projects:
  - AI-enhanced mixed reality training for emergency response.
  - Conversational agents aimed at improving mental health outcomes.
  - Applications of large language models to foster K-12 mathematical competencies.
  - AI-driven conservation efforts.
- **Impact with AI:** Outlined efforts to forge strong partnerships with industry and government, including the AI-in-Gov Council that collaborates with public sector technology providers to develop AI solutions for all levels of government. Identified FUSE as a key model for community engagement and a hub for educational activities in AI.

Visitor Oberoi offered her support and assistance in connecting Mason with local industry to educate and upskill the region's workforce in AI.

## VI. Committee Reports

### A. Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee

Visitor Oberoi reported on the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Nurat Sultana, Provost James Antony, and reports covering Audit, Enterprise Risk Management, Institutional Compliance, and IT Risk and Control Infrastructure.

### B. Research Committee

Visitor Prowitt reported on the Research Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentation received by Andre Marshall (Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact).

### C. Development Committee

Visitor Peterson reported on the Development Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Brian Drummond (Secretary, GMUF Board of Trustees) and Marvin Lewis (Assistant Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics).

### D. Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community Committee

1. Program Actions
  - a. Degree Program Closure
    - i. MS Marketing (**ACTION ITEM**)
2. Faculty Actions
  - a. Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status (**ACTION ITEM**)
  - b. Elections of New Tenured Faculty (**ACTION ITEM**)
3. Antisemitism Resolution (**ACTION ITEM**)

Visitor Burke reported on the activities of the February 13 APDUC Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentation given by Provost Antony. Visitor Burke then **MOVED** that the board approve the following action items, en bloc, as they are provided in the meeting materials:

- Degree Program Closure: MS Marketing
- Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status
- Elections of New Tenured Faculty

The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Prowitt. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 12

Absent: Visitors Brown, Chimaladinne, and Hansen

Visitor Burke continued her report, sharing that the APDUC Committee held an initial conversation on the Antisemitism Resolution, and that following the conversation Visitor Rosen worked with Mason leadership to revise and clarify the resolution language. She recognized Visitor Rosen to address that effort. Visitor Rosen reported the following:

- Following the initial draft review at the APDUC committee meeting, discussions were held with university staff, including Rose Pascarell and Sharnnia Artis. These additional discussions resulted in a revised resolution with two pages of “whereas” recitals of actions the university has already taken, and four “resolved” paragraphs, with those four provisions being:
  - **Publication of a Fact Sheet:** The university will publish a fact sheet on antisemitism that aligns with its existing nondiscrimination policies, ensuring consistency in addressing discrimination. This measure is intended to elevate the treatment of antisemitism to the same standard as other discrimination issues.
  - **Guidance and Training:** Mason employees will receive specific guidance on antisemitism as part of their annual training. Applicants will be provided with access to the university’s nondiscrimination policies.
  - **Non-Sponsorship of Antisemitic Events:** The university will refrain from sponsoring or formally endorsing any events that are announced as being antisemitic.
  - **Discrimination Policy Enforcement:** A clear policy will be established to prohibit discrimination based on Jewish ancestry or Israeli national origin, with violations managed through established disciplinary processes.
- He noted that the resolution builds on the university’s past efforts and addresses the rising issue of antisemitism on campuses, aligning with recent federal actions. He further noted that it explicitly states that free expression rights are not affected and that the resolution complies with state and federal guidelines, including federal Executive Order 14188. He added that some comments received spoke to the IHRA definition of antisemitism, but that Mason already utilizes this definition per Virginia law, the Department of Education, and the State Department.

Visitor Rosen then **MOVED** that the board adopt the revised resolution as it is provided in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Pence. Rector Stimson called for discussion on the motion. Discussion ensued:

- Several participants, including Ms. Hoffman, President Washington, and Visitor Blackman expressed concerns about what constituted an “endorsement” or “sponsorship” of an event by the university, noting that it could be too broad and potentially be applied to discussions about Israel and Palestine, educational trips, courses, or academic discourse. In response, Visitors Rosen, Pence, and Cooper said the resolution is narrowly tailored to apply to events with an explicitly antisemitic stance, and that the meaning of the university sponsoring or endorsing an event is clear at face value.
- Some participants, including President Washington, Dr. Simmons (on behalf of the faculty), and Ms. Cuesta questioned if the resolution could have an impact on free speech or academic freedom. Visitor

Rosen emphasized that the resolution does not curtail free speech or academic freedom, but only prevents the university from aligning itself with positions that are antisemitic.

- Visitor Blackman, Visitor Oberoi, and Secretary Alacbay asked questions relating to the clarity or consistency of the resolution, such as what problem the resolution addresses, or if the language could be clearer, particularly if more specific examples of an “official sponsorship” could be included. Vice Rector Meese and Visitor Rosen both offered responses, with Vice Rector Meese pointing out that the revisions in the new version of the resolution addressed the clarity issues. Visitor Rosen expressed that people understand what an “endorsement” means, and that an exhaustive definition or list of examples is not practical, as people may try to find ways around them.

Following the discussion, Rector Stimson called for the vote. The **MOTION CARRIED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE (Attachment 2).**

Yes: 8

No: 4

Abstain: 1 – Secretary Alacbay

Absent: Visitors Chimaladinne and Hansen

#### **E. Finance & Land Use Committee**

Visitor Pence provided a summary of the Finance & Land Use Committee meeting on February 13. He then **MOVED** that the board approve the FY2026 Room and Board Rates as they were provided in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Burke. **THE MOTION PASSED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 12

No: 1

Absent: Visitors Chimaladinne and Hansen

Visitor Rosen brought the board’s attention to the upcoming vote on tuition and fees in May, and advised the board to review the budget options in the meeting materials in advance of that vote, so that they may advise staff if there is any data they require for that decision. He expressed his view that there should not be a tuition increase this year.

#### **XI. Closed Session**

- A. Gifts, Bequests, and Fundraising Activities (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.9)
- B. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- C. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)
- D. Personnel Matter (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.1)

Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the board go into Closed Session under the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.A.9 for discussion on gifts, bequests, and fundraising activities to discuss a philanthropic naming opportunity; Section 2.2-3711.A.7 for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:

Akerman v. GMU  
Cerankosky et al. v. Washington, et al.  
Jeong v. GMU  
Morrison v. GMU et al.  
De Raspide Ross v. Mason  
Wright v. GMU et al.  
Zahabi v. GMU et al.

Section 2.2-3711.A.8 for Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice concerning the aforementioned and subsequent items and pending investigations; and Section 2.2-3711.A.1 for a Personnel Matter, to discuss the performance of specific university personnel. The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacbay. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Following closed session, Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the board go back into public session and further moved that by roll call vote the board affirm that only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting, and that only such business matters that were identified in the motion to go into a closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting. Any member of the board who believes that there was a departure from the requirements as stated, shall so state prior to taking the roll call, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place. **ALL PRESENT BOARD MEMBERS RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Absent: Visitors Brown, Burke, Chimaladinne, Hansen, Oberoi, Ohlhausen, and Pence.

#### **A. Adjournment**

Rector Stimson called for any additional business to come before the board. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 4:36 p.m.

Prepared by:  
Scott Nichols  
Interim Secretary pro tem

#### Attachments:

1. Written Public Comments for February 13 and February 27 Meetings
2. Antisemitism Resolution

# Public Comments

Received for February 13 and February 27 Board of visitors Meetings

| Full Name:        | Mason Affiliation          | Written Comment   |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Joseph jarjourah  | Student                    | Anti-Zionism is not racist in any way. And I would repeat that a million times, Zionism is not related to any religion or race. It is related to a belief that killing Palestinians and being on the oppressive side of a genocide is okay and normal. Being an Anti-Zionist is not in any way causing hatred to a Jewish community but proving a point that Palestinian lives matter. That in fact the idea of proposing that Anti-Zionism is even possibly racist is actually racist towards Palestinians. Because it clearly states that their lives don't matter just because of an incorrect ideology.   |
| Kay Linwood       | Community Member           | I am deeply disturbed by the pure lack of knowledge an institution holds around an extremist political ideology like Zionism. If you know this as a university and ignore it for financial reasons, remember that no amount of money can buy us out of hell. Condemning students, the ones who pay you for education, for speaking against a humanitarian atrocity is downright atrocious. May you realize the horrible side of history that George Mason University will fall into should it continue to perpetuate violence against students and stand as an institution that upholds the denial of genocide. Shame.  |
| Jane Doe          | Faculty                    | Antizionism is not racism.<br>Antizionism is not racism.<br>Antizionism is not racism.  |
| Fairouz Ouikhlfen | Student                    | Recommendation for consideration of the alternative, Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism ( <a href="https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/">https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/</a> ) referenced in this explanatory +972 article ( <a href="https://www.972mag.com/ihra-antisemitism-israel-inversion-projection/">https://www.972mag.com/ihra-antisemitism-israel-inversion-projection/</a> ). +972 describes itself as "an independent, online, nonprofit magazine run by a group of Palestinian and Israeli journalists." The university would be committing a fallacy to ignore or override the views of civically engaged Israeli citizens and adjacent reporters such as Democracy Now's Amy Goodman, without careful and unpolitical analysis. Zionism is a political movement involving American Christians in addition to numerous other backgrounds. In aligning it with features students or faculty cannot change about themselves without reasonable distress (ethnic markers, physical appearance, names, ancestry, nationality, or heritage), the university will politicize the fight against hate. |
| Declan Rees       | Student                    | Conflating criticisms of Zionism as racist will only make the campus less safe. Zionism, unlike the Jewish faith, is an ideology. It is young, only coming into the world stage in the 20th century. It's creation was an attempt to answer the "Jewish Question" and many of its founding members cooperated with known Nazi sympathizers during the holocaust. In its innate principles it pushes for the development and maintenance of Ethno-state in the holy land, an area where many different peoples call to. The subjugation and genocidal aggression to the native Palestinian population sense the Nakba, especially in the past year, has been demoralizing. If you try to make it impossible to criticize the state of Israel or the ideology of Zionism you will be putting countless students in danger. I cannot express it more fervently, do not do this   |
| Robert Zigmund    | Staff                      | I am writing to oppose Jeff Rosen's proposal regarding criticism of Zionism. This proposal is a disgraceful and authoritarian attempt to censor our students in their opposition to genocide.   |
| sara babb         | alum                       | Anti-Zionism is anti-Apartheid. Do not conflate anti-semitism with anti-Zionism. Protect the right to fight for human rights. Reject the proposal of defining anti-zionism as racism. The truth is that zionism is racist and led to a genocide of Palestinians.  |
| Laurie B.         | Concerned citizen          | Anti-zionism is Not racism!   |
| Ryan Nary         | Community Member           | I am an Arlington resident and thus I share neighborhood space with GMU's Ballston campus. I want to express in the strongest possible terms my opposition to GMU adopting the IHRA definitions of antisemitism, which dangerously conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.   |
| Sofia Nicholas    | Student                    | Anti-Zionism is just and necessary. It is resistance to the hegemonic powers trying to steal Palestinian land and life. Anti-Zionism is not antisemitic and conflating the two is dangerous.  |
| Siwar Masannat    | Alumnus                    | The conflation of Zionism with a protected identity, on the one hand, and with Judaism as a religious identity, on the other, is not only erroneous but also dangerous. Zionism is a settler colonial ideology and systematic practice that has resulted in the genocide and successive mass displacement of Palestinians for more than seventy years. Zionism endangers Jewish people and Palestinians alike, and many Jewish people in our GMU community oppose Zionism based on the facts gathered by international agencies and bodies that have found Israel to be guilty of ethnic cleansing, genocide, apartheid, war crimes and torture based on meticulously gathered evidence and verified testimonies. Criminalizing the brave and conscientious actions of students, staff, and faculty who critique and oppose settler colonialism and genocide endangers them, their educational journeys and livelihoods. GMU, this is a shameful and unconscionable measure meant to stifle dissent against genocide and dispossession at a moment of heightened US fascism. Do better.                         |
| Stephen D'Alessio | Student                    | I am writing to oppose the measure from Jeff Rosen to equate all criticism of Zionism with antisemitism. As a George Mason student it is important to me that we oppose antisemitism and make sure that students of all backgrounds are welcomed and empowered. However, all criticism of Zionism is not antisemitic and the rights of students who want to fight for Palestinian rights need to be respected as well. Please oppose this proposal.   |
| Anonymously       | Alum and CVPA Board Member | I strongly oppose the proposed adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance(IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism which conflates Zionism with anti-semitism. Leader across universities and institutions across the country are wary of this definition because of its intention to suppress criticism of Israel. It would shameful and misguided for GMU to adopt a policy which will in turn suppress free speech and any anti-Israel criticism which is not a criticism of Jewishness.  |
| K Hoffman         | Community Member           | As an institution of higher learning, the inclusion of anti-Zionism in a definition of anti-Semitic activities is a far reach. Please remove all mentions of Zionism in your DEI initiatives.   |



|                   |                  |  |
|-------------------|------------------|--|
|                   |                  | <p>Claiming that Zionism is a Jewish identity is an insult to many Jewish people. That's like saying that all Christians identify as MAGA Republicans. No religion is a political monolith and this argument is exactly why the USA is predicated on the principle that we must separate church and state.</p> <p>GMU should encourage debate about politics and support free speech when bad policies are harming people. Stepping on the free speech of students in the USA in order to defend a foreign state's willful acts of genocide and apartheid is not a smart decision. Do better, GMU.</p>   |
| Anonymous         | Staff            | <p>Anti-Zionism cannot be equated to racism or anti-semitism. To think so is to be greatly uninformed. Recognizing the livelihood and rights of the Palestinian people is not anti-semitism (see work by scholar Edward Said to learn more). Criminalizing, punishing, or otherwise preventing pro-Palestinian speech is suppression, and it is especially harsh coming from a university that lauds itself for its diversity and inclusion.</p>   |
| Ruby Hayes        | Student          | <p>Comment regarding the antisemitism resolution: The safety of Jewish people and keeping anti-Semitism off campus is important. However, anti-Zionist beliefs are not inherently anti-Semitic. Being anti-Zionist is to oppose the State of Israel that has been occupying Palestinian land and killing thousands of Palestinians for decades.</p>  |
| Jacqueline Green  | Alumna           | <p>Hello, I am writing to urge you to vote NO on the resolution brought forward by Jeffrey Rosen to criminalize critiques of Zionism and genocide both on and off GMU campus.</p> <p>This resolution, if passed, would open the door for school officials to harass and persecute students and student organizations with whom they disagree, or based on their race, religion or ethnicity. Based on the violent assault on student peace protests during the 2023-2024 school year, this is likely to embolden further harassment and persecution of peace and human rights activists, and those who oppose genocide and apartheid.</p> <p>Students have the right to freely advocate and express their opinions, particularly in academic settings that are intended for free thought and inquiry. For example, targeting students for supporting Palestinian rights is a serious violation of freedom of speech, as enshrined in the first amendment of the constitution. If passed, this resolution would violate those rights. Historically, resolutions like this have been disproportionately used against minority and marginalized communities, and particularly targeted against Palestinian-American, Arab-American and Muslim-American communities.</p> <p>The ACLU has responded to resolutions like this across the country in the "Open Letter to Colleges and University Leaders: Reject Efforts to Restrict Constitutionally Protected Speech on Campuses." (<a href="https://www.aclu.org/documents/open-letter-to-colleges-and-university-leaders-reject-efforts-to-restrict-constitutionally-protected-speech-on-campuses">https://www.aclu.org/documents/open-letter-to-colleges-and-university-leaders-reject-efforts-to-restrict-constitutionally-protected-speech-on-campuses</a>).</p> <p>Like the ACLU, I urge you to vote NO on this resolution and protect ALL GMU students' right to free speech both on and off campus.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p> |
| Roxanne Freeman   | Student          | <p>Anti-zionism is not anti-Semitism and the suppression of pro Palestine voices is a violation of our rights to free speech.</p>  |
| Omar Abaza        | Student          | <p>The definition of Zionism, a noun, "a movement for (originally) the re-establishment and (now) the development and protection of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel." The same thing is real that is now wanted by the International criminal court for crimes against humanity. This decision alone, by definition, would be considered anti-Zionist. So you gonna be able to talk about the ICC ruling without being called anti-Zionist? They Can't Criticize Israel without being called anti-Zionist? How is it that students can criticize the American government but not the Israeli one? This is all, besides the fact that Zionism is founded by The British government and the ethnic cleansing of the native people Palestine.</p>   |
| Anonymous         | Alumni           | <p>It is unacceptable to criminalize free speech on any US campus. We have the right to a voice and we the right to be heard, please don't let your decision betray the values and foundational principles of our beautiful university.</p>  |
| Jude Schroder     | Community Member | <p>I advise the board to swiftly reject Jeffrey Rosen's proposed resolution regarding "antisemitism." Anti-Zionism is not antisemitism, and yet this resolution dangerously equates the two. This resolution will not make GMU safer. In fact, it will silence and exclude anyone in support of Palestinian liberation and autonomy. Furthermore, there are many, many Anti-Zionist Jewish people, however, this resolution mischaracterizes "Jewish identity" as Zionist. If this resolution passes, it would solidify GMU's institutional stance that it is in support of genocide and willing to punish anyone who dares to question the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people. This resolution hides behind language of DEI. I urge the board to consider the students, faculty, and community members it would be silencing and excluding with this resolution.</p>   |
| Jill DeWitt       | Alumni           | <p>This resolution is a violation of free speech. The board should be ashamed of even considering an anti-human rights restriction on the freedom of students, faculty, and staff to support a free Palestine. This action would make me ashamed to be an alumni and I will never donate to any institution that restricts free speech.</p>  |
| Janet Freeman     | Alumni           | <p>It is unconstitutional to bar free speech. Please reject Rosen's proposal.</p>  |
| Kristin Samuelian | Faculty          | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>   |

|                  |         |   |
|------------------|---------|---|
| S Hamdani        | Faculty | Discussing policies of any state is fundamental to the principles of free speech and intellectual inquiry fundamental to society and to any university mission. Doing so does not constitute racism of any kind, or antisemitism. I therefore oppose this resolution for censoring any discussion of the state of Israel's policy with regard to the human rights or right to self-determination of Palestinians.   |
| Michael Chang    | Faculty | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Thank you, as always, for taking action. As we just learned from our victory blocking three additional partisan extremists from the BOV, we have a lot of power when we join together and fight!</p>  |
| Eli Nguyen       | Staff   | <p>Forbidding any criticism of Zionism is a flagrant disregard for our right to free speech. In the current political climate protecting our fundamental rights should be of the utmost importance. No ideology is above critique, no ideology warrants being held away from any discussion. Who does it benefit to prohibit critique of an ideology? What other ideologies are given this same privilege?</p> <p>As a student of the Jimmy and Roslyn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution I think it's imperative that we are able to have open discussion about political ideologies and their geopolitical consequences. Restricting this by prohibiting anything that may be construed as criticism of Zionism as a political ideology is reckless, and a restriction on the academic study being done at Mason. It's alarming to me that GMU, a school which prides itself on its diversity and open mindedness would consider a resolution that so clearly seeks to negate its own core values.</p>   |
| Samirah Alkassim | Faculty | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. This resolution must be rejected, and I urge all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Once this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry is behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>   |
| Angelica Zayid   | Student | Antisemitism and Zionism are not the same. Supporting Palestinians is about advocating for equality, not discrimination. No matter their faith—Jewish, Muslim, Christian, atheist, or otherwise—people should treat each other with love and respect. There is nothing antisemitic about expressing concern for the thousands of innocent children caught in the crossfire.   |
| Benjamin Steger  | Faculty | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>  |
| Rose Cherubin    | Faculty | <p>I strongly reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I strongly support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. Criticism of the current state of Israel is not equivalent to criticizing the idea of a Jewish state, for the idea of a Jewish state does not imply adherence to the current state's policies, and can include the recognition of a Palestinian (also a semitic group) state alongside it. Indeed, many Israelis support the idea of a Jewish state and a Paletstinian state coexisting, and strongly oppose their own government's policies.</p> <p>In its current form, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can move ahead to crafting just and effective language that include ethnic identity and shared heritage in Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> |
| Alexander Monea  | Faculty | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p>   |

|                        |                  |   |
|------------------------|------------------|---|
|                        |                  | Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.   |
| Ella Duncan-High       | Student          | Anti-Zionism is not racism. Protect free speech. How dare you try and silence students on campus.   |
| Carlin Decker          | Staff            | On the Topic of the recent resolution proposed by Jeffery Rosen, to criminalize criticism of Zionism, this resolution should be struck down. Being critical of a nation or a political philosophy it practices is a form a free speech protected under the First Amendment. Limiting the community's freedom of speech is a direct violation of their First Amendment rights.   |
| Ellen Gurung           | Alumni           | I am writing to express my frustration about the recent GMU Board of Visitors Resolution regarding the condemnation of students who engage in anti-Zionist language, behavior, and activism. Zionism is not an integral part of Jewish identity nor should be considered antisemitic as explained by numerous Jewish activists. Israel is a colonial project that is currently responsible for an ongoing genocide against Palestinian people, and with GMU having such a large West Asian/Middle-Eastern population I would hope that GMU would consider the many students whose family and friends are deeply impacted by the atrocities that Israel is committing. As an alumni I will not financially support GMU in any donation or fundraising activities if this resolution is put in place. This is not the first time that GMU has worked to shut down leftist student activism efforts and I am ashamed to call GMU my alma mater.  |
| Anonymous Staff Member | Staff            | I would like to put forth a condemnation of Jeffrey Rosen's resolution to classify criticism of Israel as hate speech. Israel and Judaism are not one and the same. Judaism is a beautiful and ancient faith. Israel is a nation, which should not be exempt from the same criticisms other nations face. Jewish people do not unilaterally support Israel, and for the university to criminalize the discussion of the topic is to decide for those people what is acceptable speech from Jews. The university also runs the risk of having to enforce penalties for "antisemitism" on community members who are Jewish. This initiative is such a misstep from the University, please do not try to prevent our university from being a forum for such important conversation.  |
| Mackenzie Liu          | Student          | As a Jewish individual, Israel is a key part of my identity. The prayers I say everyday mention Israel and its people. I'm a proud Zionist who believes that the Jewish people have the right to live in Israel. The harassment I have received on campus for the past year and a half has been nonstop. Often acts of anti-semitism like calling the Star of David offensive is stated to be anti-Zionist by people on this campus. My friends and I have been called countless names that are inappropriate and harmful. Again they were disguised under the name of anti-Zionism. I was left in tears one day after painting the star on one of Wilkins Plaza paintable walls. Six people yelled and circled around me, but claimed they were anti-Zionist and not anti-Semitic. The student government DEI committee has shown clear bias and refuses to acknowledge anti-semitism. Instead their meeting notes consist of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric. The chairs of the committee even labeled a presentation on antisemitism as something that didn't involve them. Being a Zionist goes beyond the Jewish community. I have friends who are not Jewish and have received anti-Semitic harassment for supporting Israel. This further proves that the Jewish people and Zionism are linked. The climate on campus has been extremely hostile for Jewish and Zionist students. Our voices are being silenced by people who think we shouldn't exist or that a Jewish student born in Israel is a colonizer. We have been left out of student government meetings and communications about anti-Zionist legislative decisions. |
| Elizabeth DeMulder     | Faculty          | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>  |
| Betty Aquino           | Community Member | I've heard that Mason is considering a proposal to criminalize the criticism of Zionism on campus and I am deeply concerned by this proposal as it infringes on the students right to free speech.  |
| Grace Larsen           | Student          | Please pass it, I often don't feel safe on campus because I am an open Zionist. I have received antisemitic messages, snide remarks, and have been given long glares at GMU.  |
| Laura Buckwald         | Faculty          | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee meeting.</p> <p>I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. However, this resolution is not about protecting students and faculty from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing and blocking free speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. The policies of any nation need to be open to free discussion and debate. Any criticisms of Israeli state policies have nothing to do with antisemitism, just as criticisms of U.S. policy do not make one anti-American.</p> <p>As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate free speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>  |

|                     |                  |  |
|---------------------|------------------|--|
| Hannah Landsberger  | Alumni           | I am deeply concerned about the antisemitism resolution and urge the committee not to approve it. The conflation of all Jewish people with the state of Israel is a dangerous and incorrect assumption to codify into policy on campus, and will be used to restrict free speech and students' rights to protest. As a Jewish descendant of Holocaust survivors, I can testify to the fact that the duty to protest injustice, including against governments that are executing a genocide not dissimilar to the one that my grandparents survived, is a critical part of Judaism. Students, including Jewish students, must not have their right to protest curtailed.  |
| Ana                 | Student          | Mason is suppressing Arab and Palestinian students, prohibiting them from criticizing Zionism, which is a belief system that is accountable for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. This complacency in conflating Zionism with racism will tarnish Mason's already tumultuous history. Students should have the right to oppose a system that negatively impacts their homes as well as work towards disclosure and divestment. George Mason has praised itself for its diversity and consistently brands students of color on its websites; however, it appears to lack the resources and commitment to support these students adequately. This proposal, even being considered, highlights how Mason falls short in its alleged pursuit of genuine equity; approving it will only further isolate students. Regardless of administrative decisions, students will persist in making their voices heard.  |
| Elizabeth Ann Kelly | Community Member | Zionism is an idea, not an identity. Just as criticizing our own government is a basic part of freedom of speech, criticizing another government or the actions of another nation is a basic part of freedom of speech. Students must be free to criticize the philosophy of Zionism and the actions of the government and nation of Israel (and the actions of all other governments and nations).  |
| Emily Haines        | Community Member | <p>I am writing to express concern and opposition to the proposal before the Board of Visitors that suggests adding Zionism protection to university policy as part of the University's protections from antisemitism.</p> <p>I personally have family and friends who are Jewish and who have even been harassed, so I am completely sympathetic to the desire to protect Jewish students and community members from antisemitic attacks. However, Zionism is very specifically a political ideology, not an identity, and it must be open to debate on a college campus where difficult ideas are meant to be discussed. Zionism is an ideology that can be extremely harmful, and has inherent racist and colonial roots, asserting that Jewish people have an absolute right to land that Palestinian people already owned before they arrive, and even that violence is acceptable to secure that land. The University's place in such debate, if it has one, is only to ensure all sides are respectful and that discussion is around beliefs and actions, not ad hominem attacks on who someone is that cannot be changed- Zionism is not unchanging, it is a political position. The assertion that Zionism is central to many Jewish people's identity, therefore Zionism must be protected, is a false equivalence. Many Catholics believe deeply that abortion is murder and define themselves as pro-life, but we do not consider pro-choice rhetoric, even against the Catholic Church establishment, to be anti-Catholic hate speech no matter how deeply held those beliefs may be. Zionism is the same. Just because it uses religious reasoning does not place it above reproach.</p> <p>It may be uncomfortable to allow such discussions on campus, but it doesn't make them less important to have, and groups that are already being silenced elsewhere such as Arabs and Palestinians, and even pacifists like Quakers, need academic spaces to be protected venues for free speech.</p> <p>The University, in specifically protecting Zionism, would be taking a racist and biased position itself under the guise of protecting one group from another. Please, reject this proposal, and use other methods to protect your Jewish students and faculty from direct antisemitism, without silencing legitimate criticism of a foreign government's ideology.</p> |
| Laura Dempsey       | Community Member | <p>It's come to my attention that this board is considering criminalizing the criticism of Zionism. This nationalistic movement should not be above criticism, just like we love and honor our country enough to criticize if we should be able to do so for a foreign country too.</p> <p>It's dangerous when institutions of knowledge put guardrails on intellectual criticism. It goes against the very essence of your mission and purpose as a university.</p>   |
| Kieron Rust         | Community Member | <p>I am deeply concerned by the proposal to ban criticism of Israel and Zionism from campus. Students are expressing legitimate concerns about the actions of a state's government, and their conduct in war, which led to an arrest warrant in the ICC. This is vastly different from hatred based on religion, which we all condemn. These two things are not the same.</p> <p>Countries can still be criticized even when they are deeply tied to religious minorities. We spoke out against Saudi Arabia over the Khashoggi murder, which was not only protected speech, but encouraged. Calling out Israel's deeply immoral conduct is no different.</p> <p>Protect student's right to protest. Protect free speech.</p>  |
| Pua Ali'i Lum       | Community Member | There is no greater disservice to humanity than to conflate lies about antisemitism. Regardless of how many lies, court cases, threats and removing/revoking visas of students standing with Palestinians', human beings, rights. In some cases, they are Palestinians who are constantly suffering at the hands of Zionism Yt supremacy. You can't make a lie the truth. Shame on you.  |
| Jackie Jones        | Community Member | The least Jewish thing you can do is not share opinions and argue the points of founding principles of Zionism. Withholding love is a form of abuse and not caring about the rights and humanity of other's is anti-Jewish. We all should be standing tall in solidarity with Palestinian's.   |
| Anne Komer          | Community Member | I'm of Jewish descent and I do not support the genocide and lands stolen from the Palestinian people. There's a difference between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and that distinction is a very important one. It is of utmost importance that we do not swing from no hate speech against a people who Hitler tried to ethnically cleanse to no hate speech against a government that is ethnically cleansing another people.  |

|                            |                  |   |
|----------------------------|------------------|---|
| Concerned Community Member | Community Member | <p>To the Board of Visitors at GMU,</p> <p>I am writing as a concerned local community member and family member of a GMU alum about the proposal to revise University Policy Number 1201 ("Non-Discrimination Policy") to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on and off campus. I think that the proposal should not be approved on the basis of protecting GMU students' 1st Amendment right to freedom of expression. To me, this proposal to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism seems concerned about protecting a specific political position and not at all about protecting Jewish students, faculty, and staff.</p> <p>For example, indeed it would be antisemitic to "[a]ccus[e] the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust," as stated in the IHRA examples of antisemitism. It also would indeed be antisemitic to "[hold all] Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel." Accusing Jews as a people or Israel as a state of making up the Holocaust are examples of antisemitism because they show exaggeration and stereotyping of the entire Jewish community.</p> <p>However, there are several contemporary examples listed in the IHRA definition of antisemitism that are notably not antisemitic. It is extremely alarming to hear that GMU might implement a rule to punish students who are actually exercising their 1st Amendment right to freedom of expression by adopting this definition and its examples. For instance, it would NOT be antisemitic or denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination to "[claim] that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor." The State of Israel does not represent Jewish people as a whole, so it would not be antisemitic to criticize Israel as a racist endeavor. Students, faculty, and staff raising concerns about Israel, for example about Israel being a modern colonialist state or "a racist endeavor", would not be antisemitic because it does not attack Jewish people, and instead is criticizing the government and history of Israel. It's conveniently vague that another IHRA example of antisemitism is "[a]pplying double standards [to Israel] by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation." Who or what decides what is a double standard, and what is or is not expected of "any other democratic nation"? This does not seem like something that can be objectively enforced.</p> <p>I also have concerns about the language used in the proposal. It's interesting that instead of Jewish people being explicitly the center of the intended expanded protections, the word "Zionist" is used. While white supremacists do use phrases like "Zionist" to spread antisemitism (for example, "Zionist-controlled government"), Zionist does not equal Jewish. There are many Zionist Christians in the world who are not Jewish. There are many Jewish people in the world who do not identify as Zionist. There are many Jewish people around the world, but especially here in the DC area, who are critical about Israel who would be labelled as antisemites by this change. Again, this proposal seems concerned about protecting a specific political position and not at all about protecting Jewish students, faculty, and staff on and off campus from actual antisemitism.</p> <p>I urge the Board of Visitors to reject this proposed change. There are better ways to protect Jewish students, faculty, and staff that do not need to revolve around the idea of protecting "Zionists" more than the Jewish community as a whole.</p> |
| Allan Gluck                | Community Member | <p>Evaluating whether an act is genocide is objective. Applying the definition of the act of genocide to what Israel has done is objective, affirmed by the international criminal court and numerous other organizations and countries. Thus, to say that Israel is undertaking genocide is in no way antisemitic, and in fact denying this is antisemitic for it is antisemitic to think that Jews condone genocide.</p>  |
| Mariam C                   | Alumna           | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As an alumna of GMU, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>From my years at the university, both in and off campus, I know that George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Nezha Selloum              | Community Member | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social</p>  |



|                      |                                     |  |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
|                      |                                     | <p>progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>   |
| Kelby Gibson         | PhD candidate and GTA               | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>   |
| Terri Ginsberg       | Community Member                    | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>   |
| Community Member     | Community Member                    | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| James H. Finkelstein | Emeritus Professor of Public Policy | <p>I'm Jim Finkelstein, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy and was the founding Vice Dean of the School of Public Policy, now part of the Schar School.</p> <p>According to the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), the first Principle of Trusteeship is to “Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities.” The foremost of these responsibilities is to “Fulfill your fiduciary responsibilities. As a fiduciary, you are charged with acting on behalf of the public to further the best interests of the organization on whose board you serve.” I am concerned that at least one member of the Board of Visitors (BOV) may not be upholding this responsibility.</p> <p>On February 11, 2025, Dr. Lindsey Burke reposted a multipart tweet by her Heritage Foundation subordinate, Jay Greene, in which he strongly advocated for reducing the NIH indirect cost recovery rate. Earlier, she shared a February</p>   |

7, 2025, tweet by Elon Musk:

“Can you believe that universities with tens of billions in endowments were siphoning off 60% of research award money for ‘overhead’? What a ripoff!”

Dr. Burke’s engagement with these posts suggests support for a policy that would significantly cut Mason’s federal funding—a conservative estimate places the loss at over \$2 million per year if such changes were enacted. It is difficult to see how advocating for such cuts aligns with Mason’s best interests.

This is not the first time Visitor Burke has used X to express views that, in my view, conflict with her duty of care and fiduciary responsibility as a member of the Mason BOV and chair of its Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community Committee.

I urge Dr. Burke to step down from the BOV to uphold the integrity of the board and protect the university. This move would serve the best interests of Dr. Burke, the university community, the Commonwealth, , and even the Heritage Foundation.

Respectfully,

James H. Finkelstein, Ph.D.  
Professor Emeritus of Public Policy  
Schar School of Policy and Government

Bethany Letiecq Faculty

Dear APDUC Committee Members,

As the president of the GMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors and a Professor in CEHD, I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting. This resolution is an overreach of the BOV and threatens both free speech and academic freedom.

Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling if not repressing critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians.

As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th.

Thank you for your consideration.  
Bethany Letiecq, President, GMU-AAUP

Sammy Alqasem MD resident

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.

George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.

I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.

Natalie Johnson Community Member

Protect freedom of speech. Do not adopt Jeff Rosen’s proposal to ban all anti-Zionist speech. Zionism is a racist colonial ideology that is predicated on the genocide of Palestinians. Anti-Zionism is NOT anti-Semitism. If you ban anti-Zionist speech, then you are trampling free speech and making all students less safe, especially Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students.

Nora Mona Community Member

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth,

|                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
|                 |   | <p>fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Alison OConnell | Alumni  | <p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>The IHRA definition of antisemitism is flagrantly untrue, racist, seeks to suppress free speech, and is in itself antisemitic.</p> <p>Kenneth Stern, who drafted it, says he regrets creating it because of how it has been weaponized by the right to suppress free speech, especially on college campuses:<br/> <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/antisemitism-executive-order-trump-chilling-effect">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/antisemitism-executive-order-trump-chilling-effect</a></p> <p>Many Jewish organizations, including but not limited to, J-Street, T’ruah, Diaspora Alliance, Jewish Voice for Peace and Partners for Progressive Israel oppose this definition.</p> <p>Conflating all Jewish people with Zionism and the state of Israel is both inaccurate and antisemitic. The first anti-Zionists were Jewish people, long prior to 1948. Many Jews today are anti-Zionist and seeking to suppress their voices does not make this any less true. Yes, even Jewish people with family in Israel, who have lived in Israel, visited Israel - many of them also conclude the state of Israel is committing apartheid and genocide, and therefore oppose it.</p> <p>It is also appallingly racist and very transparent to try to suppress Palestinian students and professors from speaking honestly about their own experiences of colonization, racism and oppression.</p> <p>This Resolution is a shameful move on the part of Mason, and as an alumni I strongly encourage you to vote against it.</p>   |
| Michael Beer    | spouse is alumni. I am also a Virginia taxpayer | <p>As a person of Jewish heritage, and relatives who were killed and hostaged on Oct 7, as well as the descendant of Holocaust victims, I ask you to oppose the proposal by Jeff Rosen to criminalize and/or stigmatize criticism of Zionism on campus. Many many Jews are critical or oppose Zionism. Are you seriously going to equate (or link) antisemitism with anti-zionism? And please don't refer or promote the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which also equates criticism of Zionism with Judaism. Academic freedom is coming under attack by the Trump administration. LGBTQ, immigrants, gender studies, racism/ethnicity studies, people with disabilities and DEI. The issue of Israel and Palestine is a canary bird in the coal mine. Stand firm for academic freedom and the universal right to free speech and assembly as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</p>  |
| Anonymous       | Student   | <p>Restricting students' free speech against the genocide against thousands of innocent Palestinians is a deeply disturbing proposition by a body meant to reflect the student voice. The IHRA's Definition of Antisemitism has a prominent history of being weaponized to silence criticism of Israel, and it's profoundly disappointing to see this institution do the same.</p>   |
| Anonymous       | Community Member                                | <p>Zionism, the idea that Jewish people have a right to all land that exists in a certain part of the Levant is highly damaging to not only to all non-Jewish people but as well as all Jewish people all over the world. By trying to legitimize this claim you are legitimizing all claims of old lost land, are we supposed to go back to the borders of the 16th century and entertain such nationalism? I think not.</p> <p>Even worse, if you were to legitimize such claims you are condemning the people that live in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to being ethnically cleaned and removed from where they live, which will result in lives lost and extreme unnecessary agitation.</p> <p>Also, in suppressing the freedom of speech of people against Zionism is against human rights, especially the right of freedom of speech. To be against Zionism is not to be against Jewish people, in fact it's a standpoint that is rooted in creating a better world, as validating nationalistic claims to ethnically cleanse and settle land is highly anti-human.</p>  |
| Q Garcia        | Community Member                                | <p>Freedom of speech and expression is a foundational right in this country, and should be upheld by our collegiate institutions. Of course hate speech should not be tolerated, but trying to broaden the definition of “hate speech” for political purposes is an insult to all of us, and threatens our right to speak up against injustice. We are not claiming that Jewish community members should be attacked for their identity and beliefs, hate speech should continue to be banned. But broadening the definition of hate speech to include all good faith critiques of Israel as a settler-colonial nation, is not only false, but immoral and a threat to our freedoms.</p> <p>Many Jewish community members and leaders have differing views and opinions around Israel, and to reduce the Jewish community to one stance is anti-Jewish and hateful in itself.</p>  |



|                      |                  |  |
|----------------------|------------------|--|
|                      |                  | <p>A commitment to honest and open dialogue about the issues of our time is desperately needed on our college campuses, and I urge you to rethink your assertions and definitions of hate speech and anti-semitism. Your current plans do not reflect American or Jewish values and instead threaten other groups of people being directly impacted by ongoing wars and displacement. This move seeks to divide us further, by silencing and forcing out voices that you don't agree with, further marginalizing already intentionally marginalized groups.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to advance truth and honesty in your rules and policies, not to punish students for views you disagree with.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>   |
| Grace Nina           | Community Member | <p>Freedom of speech<br/>Freedom of assembly</p> <p>Respect our rights</p>   |
| Anonymous            | Faculty          | <p>Please do not double down on policies that conflate criticism of Israel or Zionism with antisemitism. Almost every Jewish person I know feels less safe because of ISRAEL's actions over the last 15+ months, not because of Palestinians'. Equating antizionism and antisemitism makes Jews LESS safe, not more safe. The IHRA definition of antisemitism is counterproductive and compromises Jewish safety. Never again means never again for anyone.</p>  |
| Jessica Schwalb      | Student          | None   |
| Quinn Chapman        | Community Member | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Evelyn Rose Johnston | Staff            | <p>As a member of the now protected identity of "Zionist", and a member of the GMU SSI board, I am happy to see that anti Israel hatred will not be tolerated. Students Supporting Israel at GMU fully supports this decision by the Board of Visitors, and will make SURE we are accepted into every space on campus. This prestigious university should no longer allow the violence that stems from the palestinian community to prosper on our campus. palestinians and pro palestinians are EXTREMELY violent, and full of terror and hatred. I personally am glad to see that they are no longer allowed to spread their filth and their lies about a FAKE genocide. They started a war, and now they cry because they can't finish it. Ban kuffiyehs next. Those rape rags are a filthy symbol for terrorism.</p>   |
| Zahra Hilmi          | Community Member | <p>This is an extremely dangerous motion that not only violates free speech, but censors hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and more. GMU claims to be an institution that values its students and diversity, while simultaneously suppressing those it promises to uplift. GMU only cares about its image, and if this motion passes, GMU will be forever remembered as an institution that sides with the oppressor, only using its power to uplift itself and that takes advantage of its students.</p>  |
| Sara Sallaj          | Community Member | <p>Everyone in the United States has the right of free speech. Calling out complicity in genocide is in our rights and shame on George Mason University for trying to take that away from us. Shame on you George Mason, I would never want to represent a University as disgusting and dishonest as this one.</p>   |
| Susu e               | Student          | <p>GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmu and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians</p> <p>DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians</p>   |
| Ashley               | Faculty          | <p>GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmu and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians</p> <p>DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians</p>   |
| Chad                 | Staff            | <p>GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmu and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians</p> <p>DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians</p>   |
| Alex                 | Community Member | <p>GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmu and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians</p>   |

|                    |                  |   |
|--------------------|------------------|---|
|                    |                  | DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians  |
| President          | Student          | GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians   |
|                    |                  | DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians  |
| Fear God           | Staff            | GMU needs to ACKNOWLEDGE the Palestinian community at gmU and support the movement for the HUMAN RIGHTS of Palestinians   |
|                    |                  | DONT PROTECT people who call for VIOLENCE towards Palestinians  |
| Sheima Amara       | GMU Alumna       | Removing students' abilities to critique government and political organizations is terrifying. This is a public institution that prides itself on diversity, encourages political dialogue and criticism, and understands the sanctity of protecting our constitutional rights. This would be a disastrous mistake for the university and university students of all backgrounds and ideologies.  |
| Conner Moses       | Student          | <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>   |
| Elisabeth Bodin    | Student          | <p>These ongoing resolutions are not what will protect Jewish students on campus. As a part-Jewish student on campus, I have witnessed a rise in anti-semitism with deep concern - and yet I think there are better ways to address the issue. Criminalizing certain discourse surrounding Israel and its policies to "protect" against this does not just go against free speech, it unfairly conflates all Jews with the decisions made by a state that they may or may not have ever stepped foot in, and may even lead to condemnation of Palestinian students practicing their own cultural identity or discussing concerns for their people if the rules are made too vague. Jewish and other students should be permitted the capacity to engage with Zionism critically; as a modern political ideology, it is just as applicable for discourse - positive or negative - as any other belief. It is of course inappropriate to harass Jewish students for their views on what is happening in Palestine - and it is also inappropriate to bar Jewish students from stating views that may descent from the popular on notions of Zionism.</p> <p>It is also odd to me that to protect Mason's student body, more is not being done to combat certain perceivable threats to the Jewish student population here at GMU. I specifically refer to an incident of a student dressing a nazi, something that makes me and others feel unsafe, but the university decided was "protected" under free speech. How come to dress and present one's self as those who would kill us is protected by free speech, but diverse discussion on a political belief from the 19th century is not? There are several other incidents I can think of where hate speech was left protected by the university - from anti-Trans protestors to some certain missionary folk with a history of harassing non-Christian students on campus.</p> <p>George Mason tries to present itself as an institution where any can be whoever they want, and discuss what they must to make the world a better place; what does it mean for the university when political speech is controlled, but dangerous symbolism and hate speech are allowed to flourish?</p> |
| Denise Albanese    | Faculty          | <p>I write to enter my objection to Visitor Rosen's resolution, due for consideration at the meeting on the 13th of February.</p> <p>It is demonstrable that anti-semitism is a real danger and that, horrifyingly, it is on the rise in the US: as I do with all forms of discrimination, I want to register my detestation of it. However, the proposed resolution risks obscuring this real danger by eliding it with a legitimate (if, to some, unpalatable) position concerning the rights of Palestinians. There is real work to do at Mason concerning myriad forms of anti-discrimination. This resolution, however, does nothing to advance that work. I urge you to vote no.</p>  |
| Sojourner Davidson | Community Member | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. The proposal is an assault on free speech and a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p>   |

|                     |                  |   |
|---------------------|------------------|---|
|                     |                  | <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the negative effects this proposal would pose to freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>   |
| Anonymous           | Community Member | <p>I strongly disapprove of any attempt whatsoever to criminalize the criticism of Zionism. This is a reprehensible thing to do.</p> <p>I'd like to draw to your attention that numerous credible human rights and humanitarian organizations have cited, using primary sources, countless human rights violations committed by Israel, in the name of Zionism. Here are two particularly powerful, in-depth, primary-resource-filled reports that I read through, and that you should also read through:</p> <p>280-page report from Amnesty International: "Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity" - <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/</a></p> <p>296-page report from Amnesty International: "'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza" - <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8668/2024/en/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8668/2024/en/</a></p> <p>While there are articles floating around out there that try to argue against these points, keep in mind that QUALITY matters over QUANTITY. A high-quality, in-depth, primary-source-filled report is exponentially more valuable than a false claim repeated numerous times. And as a higher education institution, you should know and understand this very well.</p> <p>Criminalizing the criticism of Zionism will disproportionately hurt some of the most marginalized members of the GMU community who care deeply about human rights &amp; social justice.</p>   |
| Anonymous           | Alumnus          | <p>As an alumnus of George Mason University, one of the things I most appreciated about GMU in my time as a student was the space it gave to Students Against Israeli Apartheid, empowering it to speak out freely against the genocide of Palestinians and the racist, colonial ideology of Zionism. That this proposal to ban such speech is even being considered is utterly disgusting to me, and makes me ashamed to have attended this university.</p>  |
| Grace Venes-Escaffi | Alumna           | <p>After 16 months of publicly broadcasted genocide, it disappoints me as a George Mason alumna to think that my alma mater would contemplate passing such a harmful resolution based on protecting supremacist ideology. Anti-Zionist Jewish people from around the world have been saying for decades that association with Zionism is a desecration of their faith. This resolution posits that for many Jewish people support Zionism and Israel are integral part of their identities and that those identities will be protected under anti-discrimination policy - “many” is first arbitrary and second not representative of any majority. By the logic of “many” as stated in this resolution, if a sizable number of students identified as white supremacists this too should be protected ideology. I think we can all agree supremacy of any kind is not conducive to the progress we hope to see and facilitate in our educational environments.</p> <p>Anti-Zionism is Anti-Racism. Israel is a genocidal apartheid state, the global audience has seen it with their own eyes. To silence its criticism is to silence truth, and minimize the severity of the many human rights violations which make up Israel's history.</p>  |
| M S                 | Community Member | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors to adopt the IHRA's definition of anti-semitism that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms</p> |

|                    |                                       |   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
|                    |                                       | would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.  |
| Catherine Saunders | Faculty                               | <p>To the APDUC Committee:</p> <p>I am writing to express concern about the Antisemitism Resolution that you will be considering during your meeting today. While I appreciate that antisemitism, along with islamophobia and other forms of stereotype-based discrimination, is currently increasing in the United States, I worry that this resolution will have the unintended effect of suppressing academic inquiry and free speech, including the speech of Jewish faculty, students, and staff who are critical of the policies of the present Israeli government. There is also a very real possibility that curtailing opportunities for civil, in-depth, discussion of all the issues and ideas surrounding Israel, Palestine, and American policy toward the conflicts in that region will ultimately increase conflict and expressions of antisemitism by forestalling the possibility of difficult dialogue that could lead to greater understanding and decreased instances of stereotyping. While I'm sure the proposed resolution is well-intentioned, it ultimately strikes me as antithetical both to the university's mission and to its intended purpose.</p>   |
| Anonymous          | Alumni                                | I am concerned that this policy would prohibit any criticism of the Israeli government's actions against the Palestinian people. While antisemitism should be condemned, this should not be done in a way that excludes the plight of Palestinians.   |
| .                  | Community Member                      | Don't support the IHRA definition   |
| .                  | Student                               | Anti-Zionism is not Racism in the same way DEI is not anti-white  |
| Ellie Fox          | Student                               | <p>I'm president of Jewish Voice for Peace at George Mason University, and I urge against the adaptation of the APDUCC Antisemitism resolution.</p> <p>First, insisting that Zionism is an integral part of Jewish identity plays into the antisemitic trope that Jews have split loyalty between the United States and Israel. This is an unacceptable basis for University policy, and the Board of Visitors should be ashamed.</p> <p>Any antisemitism that happens to overlap with anti-Israel rhetoric (example: the usage of the term Zionist Occupied Government) could be taken care of with an antisemitism policy that doesn't equate antizionism with antisemitism by default. The examples of antisemitism to be given in the IHRA fact sheet, are far too broad and will be weaponized exclusively against the Palestine solidarity movement at George Mason University. I know this because the University has not taken action on actual examples of antisemitism from evangelical Christian protestors and Nazi cosplayers, being protected under free speech. I ask, what about our free speech? Will Jewish Voice for Peace be prosecuted for hurting the feelings of Zionists by calling out Apartheid conditions in Israel?</p> <p>This resolution must rejected, and we must shift away from the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism to policies that will serve jews and the rest of the student body.</p>  |
| Sara van der Horst | Alumni                                | As an alumna of George Mason University, I would like to register my opposition to the proposed anti-semitism resolution. To conflate Jewish identity with the state of Israel is a reductive and false assertion that is offensive to many Jews who do not feel an affiliation with Israel or the project of Zionism. While I am opposed to harassment based on identity, that is not the same as criticism of Israel as a state. To stifle criticism of a state and its actions seems to me to be contrary to the university's stated commitment to upholding the first amendment rights of its community members. I strongly urge the board to uphold its commitment to free speech by voting against this resolution.   |
| Wonmai Punksungka  | Student                               | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Thank you, as always, for taking action. As we just learned from our victory blocking three additional partisan extremists from the BOV, we have a lot of power when we join together and fight!</p> <p>Also - hot off the GMU-AAUP presses - we want to call to your attention a two-part article we just published in Academe, the AAUP's blog, entitled "The Transformation of George Mason University's Board." Part 1 provides some historical context and focuses on the Antisemitism resolution. Part 2 discusses the University of Chicago's "Shils Report" and how the BOV's fascination with this report could affect GMU professors, particularly with regard to the report's recommended (and, in our view, exceedingly narrow and rigid) criteria for tenure and promotion. Indeed, the Board's upcoming discussion of this report is an ominous sign that visitors may soon try to exert influence over GMU's tenure process. We urge you to read both of our Academe blog posts when you have time.</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>The GMU-AAUP Executive Committee</p> |
| Norma Rantisi      | Professor,<br>Concordia<br>University | <p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p>   |

|                  |         |   |
|------------------|---------|---|
|                  |         | <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Norma Rantisi</p>   |
| Madeline Portnoy | Staff   | <p>As a Jewish staff member at this institution, I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>This resolution is not about protecting Jewish students, staff, and faculty from discrimination - it is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. This policy will be used to discriminate against anyone critical of the state of Israel, even Jews like myself. This policy also uses arbitrary examples of antisemitism, rejecting the lived experiences of Jews in modern, historical, and societal contexts.</p> <p>This resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th.</p>   |
| Anonymous        | Student | <p>Greetings to the board,</p> <p>I am a student and TA at GMU. But first and foremost, I am a Jew who loves her culture, religion, and is not ashamed of her ethnicity. I am a proud Zionist. I fear that many of my peers do not know much about Jewish people or Zionism. I know some of these students very well and yet they never ask me anything about Zionism or even about Israel. These students claim to be fighting for peace but refuse to do the hard work that peace entails. Communication, compassion, reevaluation and understanding. But I am committed to the work because I truly wish to see a day where Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs see themselves as friends, as family who recognize just how much we both have in common. History shows us that Jews are indigenous to the land but that we aren't the only ones! By protecting the rights to include Zionists in this discussion of peace you protect peace itself. You give others the opportunities to learn, to ask questions. You give me the opportunity to learn, to coexist, to grow! Thank you for protecting your Jewish students and thank you for protecting peace. I encourage you to ask more questions. To learn more about the side you don't understand. I beg of my fellow TA's and faculty on campus to be a role model for your students. You know what it means to cross reference. You know the importance of concession, of an open mind. Show your students this. Do your research talk to real people, real Jews, real Zionists in person. Zionism is inherit to Jewish people. It is a part of us. Israel is a part of us. Zionism does not mean war nor does it mean evil. It is our indigenous right to live on the land that we come from. The land that our ancestors dreamed of in the diaspora. To discriminate against any other indigenous people would not be tolerated on a liberal college campus. Why do you make an exception for Jews? Why have you not talked to us? What are you afraid you'll learn?</p> <p>Peace is not one sided.</p> <p>Thank you</p>   |
| Martha Molinaro  | Student | <p>I am in the Arabic department. Many of the people here are Palestinians. Over the past year, some of them have pretty much had their bloodlines wiped out and all of them have lived their entire life under the oppressive chokehold of Zionism in all its real world applications. It is absurd to say that they cannot criticize or protest the very ideology that has been used to systemically oppress their entire people and kill their families and community members. It is also absurd to say that allies of all faiths and ethnicities and nationalities cannot criticize an ideology (Zionism), which is separate from an identity. With such large Palestinian, Arab and Muslim populations on your campus, it is your job to protect them instead of marginalizing them further in this environment where their rights and even some students' visa and immigration statuses are under attack. The defense of this policy seems to be that it is fighting anti-semitism, which not only equates Judaism with Zionism, but erases the very people most impacted by Zionism, Palestinians. Their voices should be THE center of conversations about Zionism, as its victims. Prohibiting them from voicing their own struggles only succeeds in cutting productive conversation entirely. Additionally, the school already has policies against discrimination based on identity or religion, including anti-semitism. Instead of enforcing those policies, you are changing the definition of anti-semitism in order to target another vulnerable community whose genocide Mason has helped fund for 15 months, essentially scapegoating them and their allies for the scourge of anti-Jewishness in this country while simultaneously promoting negative stereotypes of the Arabs as hostile Jew-haters. That is so deeply wrong I don't even know where to begin with it. Even if you don't name Palestinians in this policy to obscure its intentions, we know what you are doing because it is obvious who will be realistically most affected by this, and who is being targeted by policies like these being adapted at schools across the nation. We in the Mason community must keep the Heritage Foundation, Project Esther, and other anti-democratic, anti-immigrant, and anti-DEI policies off of our campus.</p> |
| Serena Abdallah  | Student | <p>I am writing to you regarding the proposed resolution to change the definition of antisemitism, which will include critiques of Zionism. This is a very concerning matter, as the ability to critique and analyze governments, ideologies, and ways of thinking is part of an academic environment, and this resolution will impact academic integrity and freedoms at our university.</p> <p>Last year, President Washington sent us an email that claimed hate speech is also free speech, and that people have differing opinions and beliefs, and I sent an email back that hate speech can incite real acts of violence against people and should be addressed as such. Hatred towards Jewish people and targeting someone simply because they are Jewish is wrong. Zionism is separate from this, especially as it is used as a means to punish and control people, not just Palestinians, but people all over the world who do not agree with a Zionist ideology.</p>   |



|                    |                     |   |
|--------------------|---------------------|---|
|                    |                     | <p>Freedom of speech is not speech without consequences - just as prejudice towards Jewish people is wrong, so is the admonishing of a person's character by labeling them as an antisemite because they speak out against or debate the treatment of people by the Israeli government and their military. Just because some people conflate Judaism with Zionism, does not mean they always coexist in the same spaces or conversations. Unless you want to tell me that just because some people conflate Islam with terrorism, it means the two must always be banded together? That is something that I'm sure many members of the student body would not be pleased to hear.</p> <p>While I would have loved to take this opportunity to argue my own politics, I assure you, that is not my intention. Because if it starts with conflating critiquing Zionism with antisemitism, then where does it end? This will spread into other areas of knowledge and discussion, and people who may support this resolution could realize it has seeped into something that now silences and demonizes them as well. Again, I reiterate that it is true that freedom of speech is not speech without consequences - but are you leaving us with freedom?</p>  |
| Evan Belcher       | Mason<br>Alumnus    | <p>As a proud Mason alum who is passionate about the stated values of the university, particularly its protection of free speech and diversity, I vehemently oppose this proposed resolution.</p> <p>By adopting the overbroad IHRA definition of anti-semitism, this University would knowingly have a chilling effect on productive and vital conversations regarding Israel and Palestine. In its breadth, the definition obscures and trivializes the very real problem of anti-semitism, conflating it with mere criticism of the state of Israel. Criticism of the government of Israel is no more inherently anti-Semitic than criticism of the US government is anti-Christian or criticism of Saudi Arabia's government is islamophobic. We can — and must — allow discourse critical of any government to stand at face value, without assuming or inventing ulterior motive. Adopting this resolution would align this University with a dangerous double-standard.</p> <p>In addition, it would materially oppress Palestinian-Americans in the student body, faculty, and wider community, whose lived experience over the past year and a half — not to mention the 75 years prior — have been filled with deep personal loss and cultural trauma. They should share the rights enjoyed by all others, to speak about their trauma (and indeed, name its cause) without fear of official reproach or retaliation. In the same vein, other pro-Palestinian advocates (many of them Jewish) should be able to express their views without fear.</p> <p>Finally, as the arc of history bends towards justice with the recent ceasefire deal and issuance of ICC arrest warrants for both Hamas and Israeli leaders for their respective atrocities, it is important that Mason leadership take a strong stance towards free and open debate rather than one-sided sanctions. Mason should position itself as an impartial champion of civil liberties, freedom, and diversity in this time.</p> <p>As a proud and active member of the Mason community, I ask that you thoroughly consider the above and reject this resolution.</p> |
| Christopher Lowder | Faculty             | <p>In regards to the Antisemitism Resolution, board members often said "not intended" with the reading of the text. However, it has been interpreted by a large number of faculty, staff, and students that it might indeed impact speech. This would be a chilling effect on speech. First Amendment and 14th amendment protections not only protect the intention, but the real world impact. If enough folks read this resolution as prevention speech, even if not intentional, this chilling effect is unconstitutional. With the current writing of the text, this chilling effect would be unconstitutional and could open the university up to legal action in regards to suspension and termination of faculty.</p>  |
| Hannah Wing-Bonica | Alumni              | <p>As a GMU Alumnus, I am concerned about antisemitism and do not want students to experience discrimination for being Jewish. However, I believe that this resolution should not be approved as it prevents students from protesting against the state of Israel. A recent investigation by Amnesty International concluded that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Students should not have their right to protest against Israel's war crimes taken away.</p>   |
| Hannah Landsberger | Alumni              | <p>I want to address Visitor Rosen's assertion that the antisemitism resolution will not restrict free speech on campus. The equation of criticism of the government of Israel with antisemitism will absolutely be used to restrict the free speech of students who are advocating for Palestinian rights. He claims that Anti Zionism sentiment will be allowed as long as it is not being used to target Jewish students. Who will make this distinction? Who will decide if a protest against the government of Israel is actually antisemitism? The definition is so vague as to allow any acts of free speech critical of Israel to be labeled as antisemitic. This will be used to shut down peaceful protest, academic debate, curriculum that features Palestinian history, and funding for student organizations that support Palestinian students. It is very clear to me that this resolution is actually an anti-Palestinian resolution in disguise as an antisemitism resolution. In addition, the proposed "wordsmithing" he is asking for will take up valuable time and energy from the board and from the DEI offices that are under so much stress because of the current executive orders. I do not see a productive definition of antisemitism arriving from such "wordsmithing"; in fact I worry that this will be used simply to create loopholes that will allow anti-zionism and support of Palestinian rights to be more restricted on campus. I would urge the board to not pass this resolution in any form.</p>  |
| Anonymous          | Alumnus             | <p>Criticizing a government (no matter the religion of the country itself) does not ever equate to hate speech towards a religion or ethnicity. Those are separate things. We should be able to criticize the actions of a government. Criticizing the government of Pakistan has never meant "hating Muslims" or Islamophobia. It's the same idea here. Students on campus should be able to speak up for the rights of Palestinians and not be punished for it. Do not encroach on their first amendment right.</p>   |
| Anonymous          | Community<br>Member | <p>This is a blatant violation of freedom of speech.</p> <p>It is absolutely fine to be critical of a murderous intolerant ideology (Zionism) and this has no relation whatsoever to one's opinion about Jews in general. Zionism is actually a disgrace to Judaism, which is the oldest Abrahamic religion.</p>  |
| Anonymous          | Community<br>Member | <p>Anti-zionism is not racism! As a Jewish community member, Zionism is a despicable ideal that should never be accepted and should instead be condemned. Banning anti-zionism is against the students freedom of speech and protects nobody but Israel's interests. Zionism doesn't keep us Jews safe</p>  |

|                      |                  |  |
|----------------------|------------------|--|
| Martin Lucius Bonica | Alumnus          | <p>I am a George Mason University alumnus, having graduated from the College of Humanities and Social Studies in 2012.</p> <p>I am writing to express concern over the vague and problematic wording of the upcoming Resolution of the Board of Visitors pertaining to the implementation of University Policy 1201. I believe that the lack of clarity in this resolution's language will lead to the restriction of students' free speech and right to protest actions taken by the State of Israel, and it will disenfranchise Palestinian students.</p> <p>In the resolution, it is acknowledged that University Policy 1201 (the non-discrimination policy) uses International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of antisemitism. Referring to the IHRA's Working Definition, its definition in regards to the State of Israel is clear. In regards to antisemitism:</p> <p>"Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic."</p> <p>However, the resolution adds additional criteria to the definition of anti-semitism, beyond the scope of the IHRA's Working Definition:</p> <p>"RESOLVED, this board directs that the factsheet shall include the following statement: 'In some cases, Zionism or Zionist has been used as a proxy for Jewish or Israeli. If used as a proxy for Jewish or Israeli, discrimination or harassment (including any of the examples listed on this factsheet of discriminatory treatment or discriminatory harassment) that targets Zionism or Zionist would also violate University Policy 1201.'"</p> <p>There is no formal definition of anti-Zionism in the IHRA's working definition, nor is there one in this resolution. This oversight leaves room for abuse of this resolution to categorize any criticism of the State of Israel as "anti-Zionism", and therefore prohibit it as antisemitism.</p> <p>I urge the board to revise this language with reference to a working definition of anti-Zionism, to make clear the implications of this resolution. Failing to do so would jeopardize the right to legitimate free speech by students and faculty of George Mason University, and disenfranchise Palestinian students.</p> |
| Matthew Kelley       | Faculty          | Protect academic freedom and free speech rights at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV resolution.   |
| Samirah Alkassim     | Faculty          | Protect academic freedom and free speech rights at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV resolution!!!!  |
| Christina Eagle      | Student          | Protect academic freedom and free speech rights at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV resolution.   |
| Terrence Lyons       | Faculty          | <p>Please vote no on Visitor Jeffrey Rosen Antisemitism Resolution and protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason.</p> <p>Terrence Lyons, Professor, Carter School</p>  |
| Julia Holcomb        | Faculty          | I have taught at Mason since 2002, and I have always been grateful for the academic freedom that has protected my teaching. I'm writing to urge you to protect that academic freedom. Oppose the BOV resolution.   |
| Thomas Stanley       | Faculty          | The BOV resolution is a serious infringement of academic freedom and promotes a climate that supports the most pernicious claims of anti-semitism. George Mason University does not need this resolution. It does not protect Jewish students, faculty, or staff. It only shields the state of Israel from well-earned condemnation and criticism.   |
| Elizabeth Sampson    | Community Member | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> <p>Take good care,</p> <p>Liz</p>   |
| Jim Best             | Community Member | By the thousands Israeli citizens strongly exercise the right to protest the policies and actions of their own government. Does that make Israeli citizens antisemitic? The proposed GMU policy adopting the IHR a definition of antisemitism would not be acceptable to Israelis. Why are we considering to impose a conflicted definition on Americans?  |

|                |                                    |  |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Jackie Jones   | Community Member                   | <p>To Whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns on the assault on free speech and We The People's first amendment rights. I fully believe as a U.S. citizen, that we need to protect and support democracy not for just some but for everyone.</p>   |
| Mandi Gauthier | Community Member                   | <p>The IHRA definition of antisemitism which conflates antizionism with actual antisemitism is a grave mistake. The Palestinian Holocaust is happening in real time as millions are being ethnically cleansed off their land. The public should be able to criticize the Israeli government's genocidal actions without being antisemitic! This will be a major mistake and a slap in the face of human rights everywhere.</p>   |
| Rani Abba      | Community Member                   | <p>Dear GMU BOV,</p> <p>As a Jewish community member and a parent of a student attending GMU, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This is totally appalling and even dangerous because Zionism should never be conflated with Judaism. Zionism is but a racist ideology based on supremacy, and thus it should not in the least be compared to or conflated with a noble religion such as Judaism. Jeff Rosen's outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Gus Kan        | Parent of 2 students attending GMU | <p>Greetings,</p> <p>I am writing as the dad of 2 GMU students and as a community member of Jewish faith, to express my deepest concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for GMU's Board of Visitors that would criminalize criticism of Zionism on campus. This is an appalling proposal that is very dangerous, as it conflates Zionism with Judaism. The fact is that Zionism is an ideology that many consider extremist and racist per its basic documents and principles, while Judaism is a faith that calls for equality and love between all people no matter what their differences are. Jeff Rosen's proposal is not more than an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. All institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, and it's crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity and freedom of expression.</p> <p>While GMU prides itself in its diverse student population, it shockingly continues to harm and marginalize its own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is well documented as a colonialist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Anonymous      | Community Member                   | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I believe Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors would redefine the term antisemitic in a narrow and dangerous way. This proposal would place any criticism of the State of Israel and the ideology of Zionism under the definition of antisemitism. Not only does this conflate all Jewish people with this country and ideology, but it further alienates the Palestinian and Arab student communities, who also have been deeply impacted by the conflict.</p> <p>I consider antisemitism to be a very serious matter. The identity of all Jewish people should not be confused with the actions of the state of Israel or the colonialist ideology of Zionism. Like the opinions of any other country or ideology, students should have the right to voice opposition or their perspectives on what they see as unethical violations of human rights.</p> <p>This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their</p>  |



|                  |                  |  |
|------------------|------------------|--|
|                  |                  | <p>views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I believe students should have the right to voice concern about a country, whose Prime Minister and Defense Minister both face charges of war crimes from the ICC along with a warrant for their arrests. Likewise, I believe the students have the right to criticize the human rights violations committed by Hamas. I believe Universities should allow for open dialogues and foster critical thinking and learning. This proposal would be a step in the opposite direction of such ideals.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>   |
| Karyn Pomerantz  | Community Member | <p>I am writing to oppose your repression of pro Palestinian demonstrations and activities. Your repression is seriously complicit with Trump and his allies' political maneuvers. Criticism of Zionism, a political ideology and practice, in no way is the same as anti-semitism, and you are promoting anti-Semitism by claiming this to be so. I urge you to welcome the students you've thrown off campus and to provide spaces for people to promote anti-racist and anti-genocide politics. You expose the role of the university by playing into the hands of the US government by repressing any opposition. As a retired public health educator, I emphasize how dangerous racist policies and actions are, harming the health and well-being of tens of thousands of people. It is reminiscent of the German fascists barring Jewish, women, and foreign scholars from working in German universities. Let's not repeat this.</p>   |
| Sima Bakalian    | Community Member | <p>To Whom It May Concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason University's Board of Visitors, which seeks to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This alarming proposal is a direct attack on free speech and a blatant violation of our First Amendment rights. Institutions of higher learning should be spaces of intellectual growth and tolerance, where diverse perspectives, ideas, and identities can flourish. Universities serve as pillars of social progress, making it imperative that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse, and freedom of expression.</p> <p>Despite George Mason University's commitment to diversity, this proposal actively harms and marginalizes its own students. By seeking to censor any criticism of Zionism across all university departments, it suppresses necessary political discourse and silences voices advocating for justice. Zionism, as a colonialist and racist ideology, is rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Conflating anti-Zionism with antisemitism, as outlined in the IHRA definition, is not only misleading but also dangerous—it allows fascism and white supremacy to take hold, particularly if such a stance is endorsed by an institution that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression." Furthermore, adopting the IHRA definition will not make Jewish students safer. Instead, it weaponizes accusations of antisemitism to shield a political ideology from criticism while ignoring the real threats posed by white supremacy and far-right extremism, which are the primary drivers of antisemitic violence.</p> <p>This proposal is not just an attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it threatens the fundamental rights of all individuals to voice their opinions freely. Academic spaces should empower marginalized groups to challenge dominant narratives, not suppress activism and silence those who seek change.</p> <p>I urge you to recognize the serious implications of this proposal, which undermines freedom of expression, critical thinking, and diverse discourse—cornerstones of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization, and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>Sima Bakalian</p> |
| Lana Shami       | Concerned Parent | <p>We've had enough of this injustice!</p>   |
| Elisabeth Chan   | Alumni           | <p>Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.</p>  |
| Alexander Hilert | Alumni           | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing today as Jewish alumni of George Mason to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. Equating antisemitism with anti-Zionism is both false and dangerous and would seek to silence the legitimate voices of students calling for justice on this pressing issue. As a Jewish person, it is of course important to condemn antisemitism, but it is unfair to explicitly single out this issue as Muslim, Palestinian, and other groups simultaneously face discrimination. The IHRA definition of antisemitism is hostilely criticized by organizations like the ACLU and Jewish Voice for Peace because it is the wrong approach to fighting antisemitism and serves to legitimize the actions of the state of Israel and curb legitimate efforts at protest and international solidarity with Palestine which has faced decades of brutal occupation and oppression. This proposal would have devastating effects on students just seeking to exercise their free speech rights on campus. I urge the Board of Visitors to reject this proposal.</p>   |
| Angela Barajas   | Student          | <p>Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution!</p>  |
| Dr. Vicki Kirsch | Faculty          | <p>As a Jewish faculty member, I have been on the receiving end of anti-semitic actions several times on campus from other faculty and from administrators. I also felt unsafe on campus during the campus protests and attended a meeting with the President in which information was shared and security vowed to do more to protect our students with no protection for the faculty. Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.</p>   |

|                            |                  |  |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|
| Dr. Vicki Kirsch           | Faculty          | I inadvertently submitted an earlier note suggesting that the board vote against the anti-semitism clause -- this IS NOT WHAT I MEANT TO DO. I very much support the inclusion of anti-semitism in GMU protections. As I said earlier, I have felt threatened and unprotected on campus. I have been treated unfairly by the ombudswoman and ignored in various workshops on inclusion. Thank you.   |
| Alexander Pellegrino       | Community Member | <p>I've been a Fairfax resident for years and love attending events at Mason.</p> <p>I'm writing to express my opposition to Jeff Rosen's proposal.</p> <p>I received my undergraduate degree in biology from another VA public institution - William and Mary. And I got my master's in forestry from Yale.</p> <p>At each institution I saw how free speech for white supremacy was given a free pass while free speech for criticizing powerful institutions like Israel was suppressed. And I've seen universities bravely stand up to be on the right side of history.</p> <p>You have a chance to do the right thing.</p>  |
| Benjamin Dreyfus           | Faculty          | As a Jewish faculty member who is concerned about rising antisemitism, I am writing to OPPOSE the BOV resolution on antisemitism. The IHRA definition can be used to silence criticism of the Israeli government, which is legitimate political speech (whether or not I agree with it), while doing nothing to address actual antisemitism. Our Chinese and Chinese-American students have a right not to be discriminated against because of their Chinese background, and not to be personally targeted or harassed because of the actions of the Chinese government; however, they have no reasonable expectation that they can avoid hearing criticism (even very harsh criticism) of the Chinese government (and likewise for our Russian students, Iranian students, etc.). The same is true for our Jewish and Israeli students and the Israeli government.  |
| Chad Morris                | Former faculty   | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Nada Moustafa              | Student          | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution  |
| Ron Abott                  | Community Member | Protect academic freedom and free speech at GMU! Vote NO on the (so called) BOV antisemitism resolution!!  |
| Shelley D. Wong-Pitts      | Faculty retired  | I urge you to protect academic freedom and free speech. Vote 'NO' on the Resolution to direct the University publish a factsheet on IHRA. The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism that includes criticism of the State of Israel is totally one-sided, ignoring the problems of anti-Palestinian discrimination. This dangerous policy hurts Palestinian Christians Muslims and those who have other faith traditions.  |
| Professor Molly Dragiewicz | alumni           | It is totally unacceptable for George Mason to attack its own academics' and students' academic freedom. GMU alumni do not accept the Board's extremist efforts to silence and censor staff or student speech. The US is turning the page from democracy to authoritarian dictatorship and no university can be part of the assault on democracy and free speech. Board members pushing extremist political positions should resign or be removed immediately for failing to uphold university values and integrity.   |
| Courtney Baker             | Faculty          | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution  |
| Trish Doherty              | Alumni           | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Zachary Schrag             | Faculty          | Because it is not a federal executive agency, George Mason University cannot "adhere" to presidential executive orders, which are exclusively directed at such agencies. The true intent of this resolution is that the university anticipate and cater to the wishes of the president, quite apart from any legal duty. Such obedience in advance is not part of the university's mission.  |
| Kristin Samuelian          | Faculty          | I am deeply concerned about the potential erosions to academic freedom academic freedom and free speech at Mason in the BOV antisemitism resolution. I urge you to vote NO on the resolution.  |
| Esther S. Merves, Ph.D.    | Community Member | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution. The idea that criticism of any government, person, or policy would be against university policy is anti-American -- and certainly against the ethos of a university, let alone a public university. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Ana Edwards                | Community Member | <p>Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.</p> <p>Upon first read of the GMU BOV Resolution On Antisemitism, my overarching concerns are related to equity,</p>   |

interpretation and enforceability.

1) Does the GMU BOV have similar documented commitments rebuking anti-Muslim, anti-Arabic or anti-Palestinian discrimination? Or for specifically identified ethnic, national, racial, religious, gendered or otherwise minoritized groups? If not, why not?

2) The conflation in this document, of criticisms of Zionism or the policies of the nation/state of Israel with antisemitism, and the subjective nature of interpreting and determining such, is highly problematic. In fact, the IHRA "working definition" and accompanying explanations (<https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>) work a bit harder to avoid this conflation than does this resolution.

3) Regarding "BE IT RESOLVED paragraph 11," the dependence of this directive upon the definitions and decisions of a single organization seems problematic. What if IHRA changes it's "fact sheet?" Would GMU routinely review and update this resolution? Is there a similar reliance on organizational definitions and determinations for handling description of other groups facing discrimination? Would they also be routinely reviewed and updated?

4) Regarding "BE IT RESOLVED paragraph 14," how is the first sentence in this directive not a contradiction to the second, specifically under "(2)"? ...especially since, typically, a university staff or faculty sponsor is required for any such activity on campus.

"RESOLVED, this board directs the University, .... to refrain from sponsoring or endorsing any organization, event, or other activity whose position or posture is antisemitic under the IHRA definition. This directive applies solely to institutional or governmental endorsement or sponsorship by the University and its administrative units and shall not (1) restrict the individual speech or academic freedom of faculty members, students, or independent student and faculty organizations (2) prevent the University from recognizing, providing resources to, or allowing access to facilities for any organization, event, or individual based on any viewpoint, position, or posture expressed or taken by the organization, event, or individual;"

Finally, for now, as troubling as are the above stated issues is the manner in which this resolution is apparently a response to a perceived political problem. Therefore, I reiterate: Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.

In hopes of clarity, peace, equity and progress,

Ana Edwards

|                             |                                  |   |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Sarah Ovink                 | Faculty at Virginia Tech         | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Please vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Rita Rowand                 | Community Member                 | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Dr. Kurt Brandhorst         | Faculty                          | I urge you to support academic freedom and common sense by rejecting the IHRA definition of anti-semitism. This definition as elaborated here: <a href="https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism">https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism</a> involves a fundamental equivocation of political and racial-religious categories. As such it is flawed and should be rejected as either a bad-faith gesture or poor thinking.  |
| Sarah Ochs                  | Student                          | Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution; protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason.  |
| Dr. Pamela Nice             | Community Member                 | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Harry J Foxwell             | Faculty                          | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV anti-semitism resolution.   |
| Nathalia Peixoto            | Faculty                          | Help protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Please vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Rev. . Dr. David M. Hindman | Citizen of Virginia and Taxpayer | <p>I am strongly opposed to the pending BOV Resolution on Antisemitism for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The IHRA definition of antisemitism is a politicized, inaccurate and misleading definition of antisemitism, in that it conflates antisemitism with any criticism of Israel as a nation state, thereby diminishing free expression and violating the First Amendment. There are other definitions of antisemitism that more accurately describes true attacks on Jews.</li> <li>2. Language Regarding Zionism is unnecessarily ambiguous. If a complaint is made that someone's criticism of Zionism is antisemitic, how will the University determine whether "Zionist" was used as a proxy for "Jewish" or "Israeli"? This could lead to inconsistent application or even suppression of legitimate political speech.</li> <li>3 The directive has great potential for conflict with academic freedom. As a former campus minister at a state institution and as an academic, I believe this strikes at the heart of a core university value.</li> <li>4. The resolution ignores inconsistencies in the treatment of protected classes; by specifically mandating updates to University Policy 1201 to clarify protections for "Jewish and Israeli identity," it does not similarly mandate clarifications for other protected groups. Also, given the reality that 20% of Israelis citizens are Palestinian Arabs, it unnecessarily ignores the fact that not all Israelis are Jews.</li> <li>5. The resolution references Executive Orders 13899 and 14188, as well as Virginia Chapter 471 (2023), but does not reference other anti-discrimination laws that apply to higher education institutions. This selective inclusion raises questions about whether the resolution is politically motivated rather than a neutral anti-discrimination measure.</li> <li>6. The resolution directs the University to use the IHRA definition for "tracking and reporting antisemitic incidents in</li> </ol> |

|                          |                               |  |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
|                          |                               | <p>the Commonwealth," but it is unclear what reporting mechanism will be used, whether this applies only to George Mason University, and whether the University is expected to report incidents outside its jurisdiction.</p> <p>7. The resolution mandates that applicants for admission from outside the U.S. receive a copy of University Policy 1201. This is an unusual requirement, as non-discrimination policies are typically provided after admission, not during the application process. There is no clear justification for singling out international applicants in this way.</p> <p>8. The resolution states that antisemitic conduct violating university policy should result in "appropriate consequences," including suspensions, expulsions, and terminations, and requires the University President to report these actions to the board each semester. This level of board oversight in individual disciplinary actions is atypical and could interfere with standard disciplinary procedures. It is unclear whether similar reporting is required for other forms of discrimination.</p>  |
| Mona Saleh               |                               | <p>The language of this proposed resolution creates ambiguity. If a complaint is made that someone's criticism of Zionism is antisemitic, how will the University determine whether "Zionist" was used as a proxy for "Jewish" or "Israeli"? This could lead to inconsistent application or even suppression of legitimate political speech.</p> <p>The directive that the University "refrain from sponsoring or endorsing any organization, event, or other activity whose position or posture is antisemitic under the IHRA definition" could be problematic.</p> <p>While the resolution states that this does not apply to faculty members, students, or independent organizations, it could still be interpreted in ways that deter legitimate academic discussions. For instance, educational programs or conferences discussing Israeli policies critically might be affected.</p> <p>The resolution specifically mandates updates to University Policy 1201 to clarify protections for "Jewish and Israeli identity," but does not similarly mandate clarifications for other protected groups.</p> <p>Including Israeli identity as a protected category is unusual, as national origin is already covered under non-discrimination policies. This might create inconsistencies in how different national identities are treated under university policy. This language creates ambiguity. If a complaint is made that someone's criticism of Zionism is antisemitic, how will the University determine whether "Zionist" was used as a proxy for "Jewish" or "Israeli"? This could lead to inconsistent application or even suppression of legitimate political speech.</p> <p>In sum, freedom of speech is a First Amendment right. Criticizing any government's policies is a right included within that amendment. This proposed resolution would be taken to extremes and would lead to the silencing of critical voices—a very unAmerican and unconstitutional action.</p> |
| Wally Grotophorst        | Retired faculty               | Vote NO on the antisemitism resolution. While no one should want to encourage or condone antisemitism, the fact that this resolution comes to Mason as a political act suggests it should be rejected. There are a number of "ism's" that we need to reject but it isn't necessary to enumerate them all or single out particular ones. Doing so reduces the impact of a more general statement on what our overarching values should be.  |
| Rebecca Bushway          | Student                       | Equating the natural reaction to genocide to a hatred of an entire race of people is disingenuous. This is not a resolution to protect Jewish students; it is a license to persecute Palestinian ones.   |
| Michele Greet            | Faculty                       | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Lindsey Stoneking        | Virginia Educator             | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Karen Grace              | Faculty                       | I strongly support protecting academic freedom and free speech at Mason. I encourage a vote of NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution, which does not, in fact, protect anyone (including me, a Jewish faculty member) from antisemitism.   |
| Gigi Est                 | Former GMU student, attorney. | I am writing this message to say NO to the BOV antisemitism resolution. We must protect free speech at all costs, not undermine it, criminalize it, and police it. This is an absolute constitutional violation and must be avoided. Students and their ideas and their true HUMANITY must be protected from bad faith efforts of censorship.  |
| Darlene Mitrano          | Community Member              | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Deborah Pritchett, Ph.D. | Community Member              | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Peter Streckfus          | Faculty                       | The revised language for this proposal goes further than the tabled proposal in its aggressive suppression of academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Joan Henry               | Community Member              | Vote NO! If this passes, it will send a strong message to the best and brightest of our youth why they should not apply to, or attend this university. GMU will lose faculty, endowment dollars, damage its reputation, and lower its academic ranking. GMU will become known as Liberty "University's" NOVA campus. In its most basic form, the resolution is redundant of all existing law, totally unnecessary, and a thinly veiled threat from the governor's office. (I am a former public school history teacher, and the wife of an academic at a major university with integrity.)   |
| Jennifer Hitchcock       | Former faculty member         | Please protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason, and vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Mallory Brown            | Community Member              | <p>To Whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing this comment in opposition to the adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-semitism to the GMU policies. Anti-Semitism is at large these days with prominent figures like Elon Musk and politicians at CPAC giving the Nazi Salute, and organized Nazis flooding the streets of Cincinnati. However, criticism of Israel and Zionism at its core is not anti-Semitic, it is anti-fascist. Israel is continuing to commit genocide and to align ourselves as Jewish people with</p>   |

|                           |   |  |
|---------------------------|---|--|
|                           |   | <p>Israel in these actions; to say that “to criticize Israel is to criticize us” condemns us to be aligned with genocide.</p> <p>In my Judaism and in my humanity, I refuse to accept this. The IHRA definition of anti-semitism does not represent me, and I am extremely opposed to it. It serves far more to repress freedom of speech on campus than it serves to protect myself and Jewish students from anti-semitism. Bringing the Zionist state of Israel into the discussion of what constitutes an act of antisemitism only serves to obfuscate real acts of hate. Witnessing swastikas and sieg heils on the US stage threaten me. Protests for a free Palestine do not.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration and I implore you to come to a definition of anti-semitism that leans on the lived experience of oppression and does not lean on defending a colonial entity or suppressing public dissent against genocide.</p>   |
| Anonymous                 | Student   | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Dr. Brian Turner          | Virginia citizen  | Protect academic freedom and free speech at George Mason University! Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution. Adoption of this resolution will necessarily have a profound chilling effect on legitimate academic debate, particularly about the nature of the State of Israel and of Zionism. For a BOV to intrude beyond its legitimate concern for protecting the community from discriminatory behavior into academic discussions that are necessary to understand matters as complex as conflict in the Middle East is, to my mind, a violation of the Board's responsibility to citizens of Virginia and the mission of GMU.  |
| Lisa Lister               | Faculty   | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Alexandra Harrison        | Parent of students                                      | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution. It's appalling that a university which is supposed to be a bastion of free speech, intellectual discourse, academic exploration, and preferably non-biased, FACT-based study and education prefers to waste its time looking for ways to limit free speech and further the agenda of a foreign country.   |
| Kathleen Ramos            | Faculty   | I am writing to ask that the Board of Visitors vote responsibly and ethically to protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. I urge you to Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Rosemarie M. Esber, Ph.D. | Community Member  | Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution. George Mason University would make a terrible decision by preventing students, professors, and the community from protesting apartheid genocidal occupying Israel's crimes against humanity by adopting and enforcing the biased and faulty IHRA definition. The International Court of Justice has found Israel responsible for apartheid and plausible genocide. Adopting this resolution will make GMU complicit by silencing protests against war crimes and crimes against humanity. Uphold international human rights and humanitarian law equally but not silencing protests and by maintaining freedom of speech at GMU!   |
| Katherine Gordon          | Community Member  | My grandfather was a Polish Jewish Holocaust survivor and I am appalled that the BOV is trying to silence pro-Palestinian students and community members like myself under the guise of “antisemitism.” You know what’s antisemitic? GENOCIDE. The genocide in Gaza and the West Bank is the most well documented genocide in history and it is also the most antisemitic act possible. As Jews, when we say “never again,” we mean never again for anyone. I have a right to criticize Israel, the murderous apartheid regime that has been oppressing Palestinians since 1948. That is my Judaism- Israel does NOT represent me or my Jewish values, in fact it is antithetical to Judaism. I urge you to protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Laura Buckwald            | Faculty   | Academic freedom and free speech are fundamental to students' college learning experience and a healthy democracy. Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason by voting NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Laura Wilkinson           | Higher Ed Faculty at another Virginia Public University | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution, please.   |
| Jessica Sun               | Community Member  | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As a Catholic in opposition to Christian Zionism and Christian Nationalism, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Ilia Sheikholeslami       | Student   | The board’s pursuits to essentially stifle the opinion of President Washington is an inherently political and ideologically driven decision - despite how much the board wishes to frame it otherwise. The assertion that an institution should not be able to speak out and adopt a position on issues may sound good on paper, but what happens if the ideals of the institution are threatened? This hyper conservative board has sought to undercut and defund George Mason’s DEI  |



|                   |                         |   |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
|                   |                         | <p>programs - despite overwhelming outcry and objection from both the student body and faculty - and this move seems to be a way to make President Washington complicit in the board's efforts. You cannot legitimately state that this board is not pursuing institutional neutrality for non-political reasons - it is inherently political, no matter how you frame it! The worst part is that the board has failed to engage with the student body effectively in pursuing this policy. The only student group that was consulted was the President's Student Advisory Group - a body that is not representative of the entire student population. There are countless students and student groups alike that object to this policy, and countless more that aren't even aware this policy exists! This decision is not being made in the interests of the student body or this institution. It is being made to favor conservative interests groups so as to impose their will upon our leadership. What's to stop them from going beyond university leadership? George Mason is simply a testing ground for these groups to play around with after all.</p> |
| Dylan Krinberg    | Fairfax County resident | <p>It is shameful that universities, what should be a place of dissertation and critical discernment, are still just money pits with shameless ulterior motives to silence voices that go against their unethical investments. It comes as no surprise from George Mason University, the namesake of a slave owner and human trafficker, to continually side with what's makes a profit over its students and the greater humanity at large.</p>  |
| Frank Munley      | Tax payer in Virginia   | <p>Protection of Palestinian rights is not antisemitic!</p>   |
| Jacob Janzen      | Community Member        | <p>I've received word from Jewish Voice for Peace-DC that GMU is trying to censor advocacy for Peace with Justice for Palestinians. I don't know the details, but student misconduct should be dealt with individually based on their infraction. Suspending an entire organization or passing resolutions to silence advocates is shameful. It seems to fit a pattern of people who refuse to see the tragedy that has been unfolding as a result of Zionism.</p>  |
| Joseph Crosbie    | Community Member        | <p>Free Palestine!</p> <p>End suppression of free speech!</p> <p>End US support for the genocidal Israeli apartheid state!</p> <p>It is completely unconscionable that a nation which styles itself "Land of the free" supports this kind of activity</p>   |
| Sabahat Hussain   | Community Member        | <p>Do not trample the free speech. These students are exposing the on going genocide, which is happening at the expense of tax payers hard earned money.</p>  |
| Connor Celum      | Community Member        | <p>Pro-Palestinian speech is free speech.</p>   |
| Dorothy Gudgel    | Community Member        | <p>A university is supposed to be the safest place for the free expression of all diverse points of view; as pertaining to the Israel/Palestinian conflict, Palestinians absolutely have the moral right to not only freely express their views in public forums, but to have their right to free speech protected by university authorities. Not to protect their 1st amendment rights is to fail abysmally the sacred role of the university in our society! Shame on GMU for censoring the Palestinians in public discourse with the GMU community.</p>  |
| Rebekah Cohen     | Student                 | <p>All we want is peace.</p>  |
| David Copper      | Concerned citize        | <p>What is going on? Freedom of Speech no longer practiced on your campus? All I can say to you is SHAME on you and your associates</p>   |
| Ayesha Khan       | Community Member        | <p>Stop censoring Palestinian voices!!! It is their right to exercise their freedom of speech!!! This is America not Israel!!! You are going against your own constitution!!</p>  |
| Haleema Yahya     | Community Member        | <p>Speaking out against war criminals and genocide is not a crime, you should be proud of your students and not censoring them, let alone penalizing them. Divest from Israel now!</p>  |
| Maria Lynne Booth | Community Member        | <p>Please do not criminalize pro Palestinian speech! Pro Palestinian speech should be allowed - it harms no one! It is not anti-Semitic to oppose the policies of the state of Israel. Please please do not prohibit speech. It will not help resolve this conflict by suppressing the voices that are opposed to is the state of Israel's policies.</p>  |
| Jose R. Castro    | Former Grad Student     | <p>It is unconscionable that a University of Higher Learning would infringe on freedom of speech. When people are dying in Palestine ,every day, at the hands of genocide and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Israel, humanity needs courage to stand up and protect those with no voice. Humanity does not need cowardly university administrators that are puppets of the Pro Israel Lobby and Zionist fanatics. It is time that George Mason University grow a spine and demonstrate moral conscience.</p>   |
| Jessica Snowmam   | Concerned Virginian     | <p>I am writing to condemn George Mason University's stifling of free speech and right to protest. The people of the Palestinian Territories have endured decades of occupation and violence at the hands of the Israeli government. Even today, Palestinians in the West Bank are forced out of their homes by settlers protected by the IDF and told to never return. To say that this legitimate criticism of a far right-wing government is antisemitic has to be the most baffling statement I have ever heard and a total insult to the Jewish people. You might as well be supportive of Apartheid South Africa while you're at it.</p>  |
| Norman Ferry      | Community Member        | <p>Since the Gazan COUNTER resistance against the IDF , on October 7th, Gaza has been flattened . Over a half million Palestinians have bee killed. This fact has to be expressed. Zionism is a genocidal movement rejected by most Jews. Please allow for a complete discussion of this horror. America has blood on its hands .</p>   |
| Margaret Belsan   | Community Member        | <p>Quoting from The American President move which speaks my thoughts<br/>America isn't easy. America is advanced citizenship. You've gotta want it bad, 'cause it's gonna put up a fight. It's gonna say, "You want free speech? Let's see you acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil, who's standing center stage and advocating at the top of his lungs that which you would spend a lifetime opposing at the top of yours." You want to claim this land as the land of the free? Then the symbol of your country cannot just be a flag. The symbol also has to be one of its citizens exercising his right to burn that flag in protest. Now show me that, defend that, celebrate that in your classrooms.</p> <p>Then you can stand up and sing about the land of the free.</p> <p>This is what a University should stand for. Be courageous.</p>   |

|                         |  |  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Dr. M. Colleen McDaniel | Adjunct Faculty at Northern Virginia Community College | <p>George Mason University's mission is to be a public research university that creates a more just, free, and prosperous world. The university's motto is "Freedom and Learning." Their values on their website include: "Empower students to be socially conscious leaders committed to democratic and civic engagement," and "Engage Mason's diverse, global and multicultural community to enrich the educational environment, promote mutual respect and civility, and develop global citizens." By banning Pro-Palestinian speech on campus, the university would be in direct violation of its own mission statement, values, and motto.</p> <p>There is a disgusting irony in teaching our students to challenge what they have been taught, to speak freely and openly, to interrogate popular narratives, and then to turn around and attempt to stifle their cause for a free Palestine.</p> <p>As a community college faculty member who prepares many of my students to move onto George Mason, I stand firmly against the restriction of or any intervention to prevent students at George Mason from using their voices and leaning into their power in any way, but especially to speak up against the abhorrent violence being committed against Palestinians.</p> <p>This country has a long legacy of college students taking a lead in global social justice. Students across the country have played a uniquely powerful role in anti-war efforts, the fight against systemic injustice, and the end of global oppressions.</p> <p>The decision of George Mason to do anything but listen is appalling and antithetical to the very foundations of higher education and academic integrity. I could NEVER suggest my students move on to a university that silences them. And if this resolution passes, I will be continuously vocal about this injustice to my students and colleagues at my own and other institutions so that students can make a truly informed decision about attending George Mason. I will let them know that George Mason is adversarial to its students and does not practice academic freedom nor integrity. George Mason must reject this resolution and support its students in practicing their right to speak out for the liberation of Palestinians and against war.</p> <p>Students MUST be given the space on campus to speak freely against violence and injustice anywhere in our world. To stifle that is to promote violence, injustice, and oppression globally.</p> |
| Lindsey Parnas          | Community Member                                       | As a proud Jewish person who is fervently pro-Palestine, anti-Semitism is not the same as being pro Palestine. You are criminalizing one expression of semitism aligned with tikkun olam- healing the world- and thus you are the one narrowing the scope of Judaism and targeting Jews. Judaism is a faith based on the importance of open political beliefs and helping the oppressed. I heavily advise you stop this action   |
| Amber Spalek            | Alumni   | I am strongly opposed to Jeff Rosen's proposal that would criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. As a Jewish alumna, this is an outrageous assault on free speech and first amendment rights. From my time at Mason, I was proud to experience an environment of tolerance and growth, and it is unacceptable that this would be threatened on Mason's campus.  |
| Maha Armaly             | Community Member                                       | Freedom of thought and speech in academia is essential for human progress and academic integrity.  |
| Aouicha Hilliard        |  | <p>To the Board of Visitors:</p> <p>I will not address all the contradictions in Visitor Rosen's Resolution. Rather, as a (retired) Professor of French Literature and International Studies, I will focus on the damage students would suffer, were this resolution approved.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This is a flagrant violation of freedom of speech. To prevent students from discussing ideas—at a university, no less—is absurd; it prevents them from acquiring the very skills they are there to get: sharpening their thinking so as not to fall prey to demagoguery or indoctrination.</li> <li>2. The language of the resolution will perpetuate antisemitism, not diminish it. By associating Zionism and Judaism, the resolution implicitly endows Judaism (a religion of peace and love) with the characteristics of Zionism—a European ideology from the 1890s, which promotes the conquering and settling of Palestinian land.</li> <li>3. If approved, this resolution will also increase anti-Israeli sentiment, since Israeli passports would clearly be favored, above other nationalities. Its goal is to muzzle criticism of Israel; it aims to stifle the free discussion of ideas, not to end discrimination in ALL areas of concern.</li> </ol> <p>If I still had a child of college age, I would feel dressed if he or she were attending a university that adopted a policy like this.</p> <p>I urge you to reject this resolution.</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>Dr. Aouicha Hilliard</p>   |
| John Mutzberg           | Community Member                                       | Speaking up for Palestinians is not antisemitism. Request input from Jewish Voices for peace please. If a group of religious extremists is stealing land and persecuting the indigenous peoples that is terrorism whether they are Isis or Zionists.   |
| KEVIN M MCCARRON        | Community Member                                       | <p>To whom this Will concern,</p> <p>I am a Veteran (honorably discharged from the U.S.M.C. and decorated for combat service in the Persian Gulf War). My undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina @ Chapel Hill was in Political Science, and my graduate degree (University of Maine) was in Economics. I lived in Washington, DC for over 20 years, and I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p>  |

|                   |                  |   |
|-------------------|------------------|---|
|                   |                  | <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>   |
| Maryam Rashid     | Alumni           | I’m deeply troubled that GMU is equating antisemitism with pro Palestine speech. This is disgraceful, racist, and an ugly attempt to silence voices.  |
| Ahmed AbdulRahman |                  | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Beth Baker        | Community Member | <p>I am writing with great concern for the suppression of free speech at George Mason and in higher education. As a Jewish tenured professor at another university, I am appalled at Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Joelle Younes     | Community Member | We must protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Kathleen Brewster | Community Member | I am in shock that an institution of higher learning is trying to ban free speech rights for people expressing pro-Palestinian support. Pro-Palestinians are pro-human rights and are NOT antisemitic.  |
| Amber Wixtrom     | Community Member | Please protect free speech by refusing to ban pro-Palestine speech on campus. Palestinian students and those who support their Palestinian friends have a right to speak out against injustice against their people.  |
| Lindsey Lim       | Community Member | <p>Dear GMU,</p> <p>I'm a Virginia tax payer and community member residing in Alexandria, previously in Clarendon. Why are you prohibiting criticism of Zionism which is a political ideology? Are you prohibiting criticism of communism, liberalism, conservatism? Many Orthodox Jews, including inside Israel, don't support Zionism precisely because it goes against their religious belief of waiting for the Messiah to re-establish Israel. Would you criminalize Jews who criticize Zionism for going against their religious believes?</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would</p>   |



|               |   |  |
|---------------|---|--|
|               |   | <p>aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus.</p> <p>This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a political ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Fred Lavy     | Community Member                          | Students should have free speech to support suffering Palestinians and to denounce genocide. Do you not allow free speech?   |
| Jack R Leff   | Colleague from SW VA                      | As a Jewish academic I am dismayed to see this biased resolution on antisemitism be put before the board without due process. The IHRA definition of antisemitism does not protect against antisemitism and instead focuses its efforts to protect Israel from legitimate academic criticisms. If I were to apply to present at a conference or other scholarly forum at GMU as a political researcher who is often critical of Israeli policy, this resolution would define my contributions as antisemitic despite being obvious protected academic speech from a Jewish scholar. Vote no on this resolution that would target Jewish scholars in addition to just being an obviously racist attack on our Palestinian colleagues who speak up against ethnic cleansing.   |
| Roxanne Arnon | Community Member                          | Pro-Palestinian speech on college campuses is not anti-Semitic. I am a Jewish community member and it is vital that students have this right to speak up on the behalf of Palestinian people who are struggling and work to divest from Israel.  |
| Stefani Evans | Concerned member of the Fairfax Community | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my opposition to a resolution before George Mason University's Board of Visitors that aims to ban all criticism of Zionism, a political ideology, on GMU's campus. This outrageous resolution represents a blatant assault on free speech at GMU, within the Fairfax community and within the United States of America. This resolution is a part and parcel of the attacks on higher education, the poor, women's rights, LGBTQ rights, black and brown lives, and the Palestinian Solidarity Movement. It directly undermines George Mason University's ability, as an institution of higher education, to foster and inclusive environment where diverse perspectives and ideas can thrive.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse faculty, staff, and student body and its commitment to "creating a more just , free and prosperous world." Yet the resolution in front of the Board seeks to snuff out and repress pro-Palestinian organizing and speech, by falsely conflating criticism of Israel and Zionism with Anti-Semitism.</p> <p>Zionism is a political ideology that has fueled the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians from their homes and lands. It has robbed the American people of billions of dollars in taxpayers dollars that have been used to bomb Palestinian women and children and arm Israeli soldiers instead of being used here at home for health care, education, food, and the well being of everyday Americans.</p> <p>The conflation of antisemitism with anti-zionism and criticism with the state of Israel does nothing to keep Jews nor Americans safe. Instead, it obscures our ability to combat real antisemitism and puts a target on the backs of Palestinians, everyday Americans and anyone, including Jews, who speak out for Palestinian freedom.</p> <p>The resolution poses a grave threat to freedom of speech and expression at George Mason University and if it passes would lead to the stifling of dissent, discrimination, and violent repression on university campuses across the country. It would be a dark day for George Mason University and American democracy if this resolution is to pass. I urge to find the courage to speak out and oppose this resolution not only for today but for the future of our children, our children's' children and our democracy.</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>Stefani Evans</p> |
| Elicia Yoffee | Alumni                                    | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>My name is Elicia Yoffee and I am an alumna of the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. I am also an American Jew.</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p>  |

|                       |                                      |   |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
|                       |                                      | <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>   |
| TAQWA JAMEEL MUHAMMAD | Community Member                     | Check the definition of SEMITIC...it includes Arabs. No country, group or individual has the Right to subject another to GENOCIDE. Freedom of Speech is a corner stone of Democracy. Institutions of Higher Learning have a historic experience of speaking Truth to Power. President Jimmy Carter labeled Israel treatment of Palestinians as APARTHEID.   |
| Mohammed Ahmad        | I have 3 kids who graduated from GMU | Why would anyone get banned from expressing their opinions and to know the truth about the occupation   |
| Ann von Lossberg      | relative of student                  | How can a university censor one group, the Palestinians? All they ask for in Israel and here is equality. Please show everyone that you value and protect discourse and free speech in your university.   |
| Sally Andrews Gudas   | Community Member                     | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As a Quaker whose faith community has had close ties to Palestine since the late 1860s and before, it is with sadness and concern that I read the proposal of Jeff Rosen that the Board of Visitors at George Mason is considering that would make criminal ALL criticism of Zionism on campus. Zionism is not Judaism, and criticizing Israel is not anti-Semitic. The narrative the Zionists have been pushing for more than 100 years has brought us to this point. You are playing with fire as you propose this attack on free speech – a horrific violation of first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. If the Board of Visitors takes this action, it will show it is not serious about providing an equal voice and protections to all its students and faculty and will also be guilty of discrimination against Palestinian students.</p> <p>It has been curious that those who drafted this proposal are fighting against free expression on US campuses and peaceful protest but are not openly concerned about the actual genocide going on in Gaza. You are concerned about protected speech, and the students protesting on your campus are calling out the genocide and killing and humanity of Israel to Palestinians. Actual killing - not just speech.</p> <p>I grew up 5 miles down Braddock Road from GMU and attended summer school there many years ago. I have been proud of the diverse area northern Va has become and that George Mason has mirrored this diversity. This proposal will also harm the very Jewish students you are falsely claiming would be victims of anti-Semitism. This proposal seeks to silence and censure any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians.</p> <p>I hope that you will open your eyes and learn about the oppression of Palestinians. Actually, I hope you will take time sit down with our Jewish brothers and sisters in the DC Metro Chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace who I follow closely.</p> <p>If you go forward with this plan, we will know that what happened is that money and power are in control at George Mason, and not the principles and mission of the University; we will know that you have sold freedom of expression to the highest bidder.</p> <p>If you vote for this proposal, we will also know that you are erroneously conflating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. As a state taxpayer, some of my taxes go to your University, I urge you to vote against this proposal. You owe this state a fair system at GMU.</p> |
| Mariam C              | Alumna                               | <p>As an alumna holding multiple degrees from GMU, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p>   |

|                |                         |  |
|----------------|-------------------------|--|
|                |                         | <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Andrew C       | Alum                    | <p>I'm an alumnus of Mason, and I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Jenai McKee    | Friend of a GMU student | <p>I am writing as a VA resident and friend of a GMU student who is concerned about how public universities in my area react to pro-Palestine organizing on their campuses. Students and other members of the campus community should be able to express their views without censorship, especially in the case of protesting a genocide and the occupation of Palestine by Israel. Please do not ban pro-Palestine speech at GMU; instead, listen to the demands of these students who are just trying to speak up for the safety and rights of Palestinians. Please also rescind any punishments made against students who have spoken up or organized for Palestine. Thank you for your time and consideration!</p>   |
| Dalal Musa     | Alumnus                 | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am an alumnus of GMU (BSW 1998) and alarmed at Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. Rosen's proposal seeks to silence any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments.</p> <p>I have seen GMU become increasingly reactionary over the past 20 years, yet this is a new low. This proposal is an utterly intellectually dishonest attack on free speech and student and faculty's first amendment rights.</p> <p>George Mason University's student population is diverse and a source of strength. Many of your students and alumni are Middle Eastern, specifically Palestinian. I cannot believe current students feel safe or welcome with this kind of political agenda threatening them. Further, many Jewish people are strong anti-Zionist activists. Caving in to the lie that to criticize Israel and Zionism is anti-Semitic completely degrades the integrity of GMU.</p> <p>Arabs are Semitic by the way.</p> <p>The truth, which Rosen seeks to hide and distort, is that Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent expulsion, exploitation, and extermination of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism and is part of the reactionary right political agenda. Students and faculty must be able to discuss these geopolitical realities which are among the most urgent issues of our day.</p> <p>If GMU truly "honor freedom of thought and expression," this proposal will be thrown in the garbage where it belongs.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>   |
| David Wolinsky | Parent of graduate      | <p>I am an old Jewish grandpawho spent many years thinking about where all the "good people" and good nations were during the Holocaust, when the larger part of his mother's family was exterminated along with 50, 000 other Greek Jews and many millions more. A university, of course, is neither a nation nor an individual -- but for most of my life (lots of folks with advanced degrees) I expected more, even, from them.</p> <p>I also know the terror inside most Jews of all generations --in Israel in the form of "they want to push us all into the sea." Now, please look unflinchingly at Israel's attempt "to prevent that", by destroying Palestinian land and life wholesale. Do not "compare" that to the atrocities of Oct.7. Compare it to some on campus feeling threatened by demonstrations in defense of Palestinian life, and to donors who threaten you.</p> <p>Mason has joined universities that, so far, have abandoned claims to dialog, learning, and humane values, punishing protesters and in some cases expelling students. Please reverse course and remove your name from the academy's Wall of Shame.</p>  |
| Tuqa Nusairat  | Alumni                  | <p>To whom it may concern,</p>   |

|                        |                  |   |
|------------------------|------------------|---|
|                        |                  | <p>I am writing to express my profound concern over Jeff Rosen's proposal to George Mason's Board of Visitors, which seeks to criminalize any criticism of Zionism on campus. This alarming proposal constitutes a direct attack on free speech and represents a serious violation of our first amendment rights. Higher education institutions are meant to embody tolerance and intellectual growth, cultivating spaces where a wide range of perspectives, ideas, and identities can flourish. Universities play a key role in shaping social progress, making it vital that they preserve the values of inclusivity, open debate, and the freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University boasts a diverse student body but continues to harm and marginalize its own students through proposals like this one. This measure aims to stifle any discussion or critique of Zionism across all University departments. Zionism, rooted in colonialism and the violent dispossession of Palestinians, is a subject that warrants open discussion, not censorship. To equate antisemitism with anti-Zionism is a dangerous oversimplification that could embolden white supremacy and fascism, particularly when supported by an institution that claims to uphold "freedom of thought and expression." This proposal is an attack on the fundamental rights of all students to express their views without fear of retribution. Marginalized communities depend on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and push for change, yet the University's actions are actively suppressing the voices that should be championed.</p> <p>I urge you to reflect on the dire consequences of adopting this proposal, which seeks to undermine the core values of freedom of expression, critical thought, and diverse discourse that are integral to higher education. Censoring these freedoms will not only degrade the educational experience but also set a perilous precedent for increased censorship, marginalization, and the erosion of democratic principles within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Natalie Johnson        | Community Member | I urge you to protect free speech on campus and reject the proposal to criminalize all criticisms of Zionism on campus. Zionism is settler colonial genocidal ideology. How in the world can you have witnessed the last year and half of the US-Israeli genocidal war against the Palestinian people and then think it's necessary to criminalize speech that critiques the ideology undergirding that death machine? How can you live with yourself? At the bare minimum you should at least protect freedom of speech on campus which means students must be free to engage in all forms of critiques of Zionism. Do the right thing. Reject Jeff Rosen's proposal.  |
| Duncan Price           | Parent           | I am outraged that George Mason wants to ban "Pro-Palestinian" speech. I assume this is because there is a continued false assertion that "pro-palestinian" is anti-semitic. This continued false narrative is pure and simple propaganda from AIPAC, ADL, Netanyahu etc. Why students are prevented from supporting a group of people who have been under occupation for decades, with no rights, and more recently subjected to ethnic cleansing, is beyond me. Is George Mason cowering to forces that control funding? At a minimum you are preventing free speech. Worse you are doing it on the basis of false claims of anti-semitism. My family is Jewish by the way.. We know anti-semitism we see it. Supporting Palestinians does not equal being anti-semitic. Wake up from the propaganda. I am very disappointed that George Mason is even considering this. If this goes into effect I will support all legal efforts against the university. My child is strongly considering leaving George Mason for another school because of this. A stain on the university is what this has become.   |
| Ronald Field           | Community Member | Institutions of higher education should value free speech.  |
| William F. Simonds, MD | Community Member | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As a practicing physician and strong supporter of human rights, I am writing to express my grave concern regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism and the State of Israel on campus.</p> <p>Anti-Zionism is NOT anti-Semitism, and conflating the two is (in fact) anti-Semitic, since it would hold all Jews everywhere responsible for the State of Israel's multiple violations of human rights against the Palestinians living under brutal military occupation.</p> <p>Judaism is a wonderful faith- the modern State of Israel is a violent and oppressive Golden Calf.</p> <p>Elevating the IHRA definition of anti-semitism would be WRONG since its examples conflate anti-semitism with anti-Zionism, and thus tends to criminalize criticism of the Jewish state.</p> <p>This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of students' first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism (and Israel's brutal apartheid state, as assessed by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch among others) within ALL University departments.</p> <p>Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, and is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education.</p> |
| Abby Steckel           | Community Member | <p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation</p>  |

|                      |                   |  |
|----------------------|-------------------|--|
|                      |                   | <p>of students' first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal, which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Rebecca Helgersen    | Alumnus           | Please do not equate antizionism with antisemitism- they are not the same thing. Being pro Palestine does not make one antisemitic. As a GMU alumnus, I want to be proud of my school and degrees from there, and do not want my school to be censoring pro Palestine speech and actions.  |
| Joanne Heisel        | Community Member  | If you carefully follow what Israel is doing to the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, I think you would be quite sympathetic to the pro-Palestinian voices on your campus. They are truly standing up for the underdogs in this extremely lopsided David and Goliath struggle. Israel is clearly and without a doubt the oppressor!  |
| Nadia A Carrell, PhD | family of student | <p>I am writing to urge you to reject Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. By restricting discourse which is essential in an academic setting George Mason is sending students into the world under prepared for life and service to their communities, country, and world</p> <p>Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous.</p> <p>If you label everything as anti-semitism you are emptying it out of meaning.</p>  |
| Kirsten Wittkowski   | Community Member  | I am a concerned community member that lives in the immediate vicinity of GMU. The resolution worries me because it references Executive Orders 13899 and 14188, as well as Virginia Chapter 471 (2023), but does not reference other anti-discrimination laws that apply to higher education institutions. This selective inclusion raises questions about whether the resolution is politically motivated rather than a neutral anti-discrimination measure. Please protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason: Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Dale Scott Rothman   | Faculty           | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| JoLillian Zwerdling  | Community Member  | <p>I am a Jewish DC resident, born and raised in the DMV and I am writing to express my dismay regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Israel on campus. This proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression, especially right now at a time when the current presidential administration is trying to violate these principles and rights.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal, rather than protecting Jewish students, seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Israel within ALL University departments. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous for students of all backgrounds (including Jewish students)-- it allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish students' educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Caolan Eder          | Community Member  | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As a Jewish community member who grew up participating in GMU's workshops for young people, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to</p>   |

|                          |                   |  |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--|
|                          |                   | <p>express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>   |
| Heather Gottlieb         | Alumni            | <p>Subject: Protect Free Speech and Academic Freedom at George Mason University</p> <p>Dear Members of the Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the ongoing suppression of pro-Palestine advocacy at George Mason University. The suspension of Students for Justice in Palestine, the barring of two Palestinian students from campus, and the proposed resolution to ban pro-Palestine speech directly undermine the university's commitment to free expression, academic freedom, and the principles of open dialogue that are fundamental to higher education.</p> <p>As a public institution, George Mason University has a legal and ethical obligation to uphold the First Amendment rights of its students. Silencing political speech—especially in response to pressure from external entities—sets a dangerous precedent that threatens the integrity of the university and the democratic values it should uphold. Regardless of one's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is imperative that students be allowed to express their views, organize peacefully, and engage in meaningful discussions without fear of censorship or reprisal.</p> <p>I urge you to reject any resolution that seeks to ban pro-Palestine speech and to reinstate Students for Justice in Palestine as a recognized campus organization. Furthermore, I call on the university to ensure that Palestinian students, like all members of the Mason community, are treated fairly and without discrimination.</p> <p>I hope you will take a stand for free speech and academic integrity by opposing efforts to suppress student activism. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>Heather Gottlieb<br/>Alumni, Class of 2005</p>   |
| Leah Zahniser            | Community Member  | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>Censoring students who are fighting against genocide is deplorable. You know you will be on the wrong side of history. You are equivalent to the administrations that shut down protests for Vietnam, for civil rights, for gender equality, against the South African Apartheid, ETC.</p> <p>The antisemitism argument has never ever ever worked. To favor Zionist Jewish students and censor non-Zionist Jewish students (like me) is antisemitic.</p>  |
| Mohamed Khelil Bouarrouj | Alumni            | <p>I think it is absurd to establish a definition of prejudice whereby political actions are shielded from criticism due to spurious smears of bigotry. The cynical use of antisemitism to silence critics of a nation state is obvious.</p>   |
| S Jahangeer              | Community Member  | <p>Censoring pro-Palestine students is trampling on their first amendment rights. You should be ashamed. This must stop.</p>   |
| Anonymous                | Community Member  | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Virginia Donaldson       | Concerned citizen | <p>I am writing to express my opposition to a resolution before George Mason University's Board of Visitors that aims to ban all criticism of Zionism, a political ideology, on the GMU campus. This outrageous resolution represents a blatant assault on free speech and is part a parcel of the Right's war on higher education and the Palestine solidarity movement. It directly undermines George Mason University's ability, as an institution of higher education, to foster an environment where diverse perspectives and ideas can thrive. George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student body and it's commitment to, "creating a more just, free, and prosperous world." Yet this resolution seeks to silence pro-Palestine organizing and speech by falsely conflating criticism of Israel and Zionism with antisemitism. Zionism is a political ideology that has fueled the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians from their</p>   |



|                             |                       |  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
|                             |                       | homes and land. The conflation of antisemitism with anti-Zionism and criticism of the state of Israel does nothing to keep Jews safe. Instead, it obscures our ability to combat real antisemitism and puts a target on the backs of Palestinians and anyone, including Jews, who speak out for Palestinian freedom and an end to an active genocide. This resolution poses a grave threat to freedom of speech and expression at George Mason University and would further right-wing efforts to crush dissent on university campuses across the country. I urge you to oppose it.  |
| Alex Joseph                 | Community Member      | I am a Jewish student, and an ardent advocate of free speech, expression and assembly. Students should not be repressed for their beliefs, especially when they are standing up to apartheid and genocide. Anti-Zionism is not anti-semitism.  |
| Nance Fayyad                | Community Member      | <p>Dear George Mason Board of Visitors and all concerned,</p> <p>I am writing you with deep concerns regarding your attempt to limit freedom of speech on the University's campus. I don't need to school you on one of our most sacred bill of rights, or do I? It doesn't matter whether we agree with a particular idea or speech. What matters is our right to freely express ourselves without fear of censorship or retribution. Universities above all places is where freedom of speech and the free exchange of ideas is paramount, Your plans to ban pro- Palestine speech on campus is doing the very opposite! Just because someone is representing a Palestinian perspective does not make that an offensive speech or an antisemitic one.. Palestine and Israel are not mutually exclusive subjects. Talking about one's right to live free like everyone else in the world, is not "antisemitic" speech for example. How did we get to a place where we are banning ideas and words? What are we afraid of? How can we ever resolve differences if we are banned from freely expressing ourselves?</p> <p>What a dark stain it will be on your University if you do this! Do not give in and sellout on the very essence of what Universities should represent.</p> <p>You owe it to your students and faculty to continue to uphold the free flow of ideas and speech.</p> <p>My nephews and nieces graduated from George Mason and all are now successful, outstanding citizens of their communities and the world.</p> <p>They did not face the kind of threats to our freedoms as we face today.</p> <p>Do the right thing by your students and staff and be the University I hope to send my children to one day.</p> <p>Stop this shameful resolution and protect freedom of speech, all speech on George Mason's campus.</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>N. Fayyad</p> |
| jane eyre                   | conscientious citizen | Adopting the BOV statement is not only opening a can or worms, but it says undoubtedly that this academic institute is really a sham that claims to teach students to be upright citizens respecting and upholding democratic values while indulging in sucking up to Israel and the political parties carrying out their evil and immoral activities in a genocide that speaks volumes of their barbarity. This surely is on par with the actions in the Book of Kings claiming to follow the one true God.   |
| Mark Schek                  | U S Citizen           | <p>There is absolutely no legal mechanism to arrest pro Palestinian student.</p> <p>The U S is not at war with the Palestinians, and Palestinians have not declared war on the U S.</p> <p>No emergency decree has been issued.</p> <p>Therefore prohibited speech of one group is a prohibition to all groups.</p> <p>I'm Jewish. My religion tells me to expand scholarship and Discourse.</p> <p>Zionism is not Judaism. It's a new idea with no basis in the Jewish 5000 year history..</p> <p>Please don't subvert my religion, please.</p>   |
| Pom Trutna                  | Community Member      | <p>What side of history are you trying to be on, truly? The HRC, ICC, Amnesty International, Doctors w/out Borders and countless other humanitarian organizations recognize that what is happening in Gaza and Palestine is genocide.</p> <p>Violating the free speech of your students will not change any of that. Degrading yourself and demoralizing your staff, student body and fellow institutions by kowtowing to right-wing Zionists who betray the fundamentals of Judaism, will further stain your legacy.</p> <p>Do what is right by humanity and deny the IHRA of anti-semitism. You will look back at this time and cringe if you betray Jewish students and Muslim students alike by conflating any criticism of Israel with anti-semitism. Stand on the right side of history. Reject the IHRA.</p>  |
| Daniel Delos                | Alumni                | <p>It's come to my attention that GMU is trying to censor pro-Palestine/anti-Genocide organizing by threatening suspensions and expulsions of students and faculty. This is a farce. No matter what the IHRA claims, protesting genocide and ethnic cleansing is NOT antisemitism. Protesting Israel's state policies is NOT antisemitism. This conflation of antisemitism and Israel's state policies is actually a form of antisemitism itself. Particularly towards the many other Jews who are opposed to these policies, including in the country of Israel itself.</p> <p>As a GMU graduate, it makes me ashamed that this point even needs to be argued. I strongly urge you reconsider this policy and allow students the freedom to organize around causes that they, like most Americans and the vast majority of the world consider vitally important.</p>  |
| Daniel Thomas (DT) Schatten | Community Member      | As a GMU MFA graduate who was simultaneously an employee, student, member of the AAUP, and member of GMU's Jewish community until my graduation in 2023, I strongly and entirely condemn the IHRA's proposed definition of antisemitism, as it reflects a view of Judaism defined solely by the European powers willing to relocate us from our homes to anywhere but where we were prior to the 1920s, all for the sake of denying their complicity in the German Holocaust. The weaponization of my race against Arabic people will always fail, because I know I do have a birthright - to Eastern Europe, from where my great-grandparents were exiled in the face of extermination, and Mr. Rosen's obfuscation of this obvious fact for his political and real-estate-based agenda is shameful and genocidal. We the Jews, as with all other oppressed and marginalized people, face one single enemy: the boot of fascism, which currently takes the form of boots such as yours, Mr. Rosen.  |

|                   |                          |   |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---|
| KellyYeong        | Community Member         | Protect academic freedom and free speech for all. Vote no to BOV . I support all individuals rights!  |
| Sam Raya          | Community Member         | George Mason is better than prohibiting freedom speech. Please retract your decision to proof to the community how the school is keeping its principals during these unusual days we are facing as a nation. Your decision will affect my decision to send my four kids to George Mason.  |
| Susan Mah-Leung   | Community Member         | Resolution to ban Pro-Palestinian speech on campus is not only racist, it goes against the First Amendment of the Constitution and most definitely would be a backward step in history for George Mason.  |
| Alfred Lupton     | Community Member         | This absurd resolution is financed by a foreign government that is a direct threat against free speech . Why is a foreign entity like Israel dictating our constitutional rights,<br><br>If you vote in favor of this resolution you will be responsible for the death of free speech and be a "useful idiot " in what is looking like "Fifth Column. Vote NO.  |
| Johanna Hermanson | Student                  | Please vote no on the BOV antisemitism resolution. The existing statements are enough to protect all populations. Should you choose to move forward with the statement, then you must craft statements for every protected group on campus.   |
| Melinda Scott     | Alumni                   | Calling for the genocide of Jewish people - which is what "river to the sea" and "globalize the infitada" means - is not "free speech". Our founding fathers, who were readers of the Old Testament, never would have fathomed that the First Amendment would be used to call for the murder of Jewish people. I fully support incorporating IHRA's definition of Antisemitism in light of world events and what has been happening on college campuses. The failure of professors to teach about the Islamic Colonization of the Middle East has led to outrageous acts of Antisemitism. GMU should be ashamed of tabling the resolution.  |
| Dr. Safiya Samman | Parent of Alumni         | I urge the university to allow free speech by allowing the occupied people Palestinians to tell their stories and stand against occupation by an apartheid Zionist government of Israel . I also emailed my urgent request to you   |
| Amy Freeman       | Community Member         | You support Israeli and Jewish rights. I do, too.<br>But where's your protection for freedom of speech against Israel's actions? Your support of Palestinian rights? Your compassion over the carnage in Gaza?<br>You are complicit.  |
| Elizabeth smith   | A reader of profs' books | I've read books by some of your professors. Shame!  |
| Jessica Hurley    | Faculty                  | I am a Jewish faculty member at Mason and I believe strongly that conflating Jews with Israel and especially with Zionism is itself antisemitic ("All Jews believe X" and "Jews belong to Israel more than to the US" are both deeply antisemitic tropes). I am horrified that these antisemitic tropes are being incorporated into Mason's official policy and urge the board to vote "no" on the so-called "Resolution on Antisemitism" and to remove the IHRA definition from Policy 1201.   |
| G. Chesler        | Faculty                  | Protect academic freedom and free speech rights at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV resolution.  |
| Walter Heinecke   | Virginia citizen         | Dear Members of the BOV at George Mason: Please Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution. Zionism is a reflection of the Israeli State. As a citizen I should be free to be critical of any nation even our own. Being anti-Zionist does not equate to Being anti-Semitic. Making the changes that Member Rosen is advocating for is an unconstitutional abridgment of our rights to free speech. This is a slippery slope, what is next a resolution to prevent citizens from making critical comments of Russia?   |
| Katey Funderburgh | Student                  | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Sammy Alqasem     | Community Member         | To whom it may concern,<br><br>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.<br><br>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.<br><br>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions. |
| Manuel Blanco     | Community Member         | This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.   |



|                                |                               |   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Anonymous<br>Sophomore Student | Student                       | <p>Dear Members of the Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am an out-of-state student at George Mason University, and I chose to invest in this institution by paying for room and board because I believed in the value of our school. However, the increasing cost of on-campus housing raises significant concerns regarding affordability and fairness for students.</p> <p>Currently, I pay approximately \$15,000 per academic year to live in a shared apartment-style dormitory. My unit, which is approximately 1,400 square feet and shared with three other students, collectively generates around \$60,000 annually for the university. Comparatively, if this apartment were rented in the local housing market, the total cost would likely range between \$1,300 and \$2,000 per month. Yet, each of us is paying a similar amount individually while sharing the space. Furthermore, our housing contracts only cover the academic year, and students are required to pay additional fees to remain on campus over winter break—an added burden, particularly for those who may not have another home to return to.</p> <p>I respectfully ask whether the Board has personally toured and evaluated on-campus housing before determining its cost. Have you considered the financial strain that a housing price increase places on students? In my home state, the minimum wage remains \$7.25 per hour. Even with a summer job paying approximately \$9 per hour after taxes, I would need to work at least 40 additional hours just to cover the proposed increase. Many students do not have the financial flexibility to absorb these rising costs.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the real impact of these decisions on students who are already working tirelessly to afford their education. I invite you to experience GMU housing firsthand, even for just one night, to better understand the conditions and value of what we are being asked to pay for.</p>  |
| Susan Fraiman                  | UVA Faculty Member            | I'm extremely concerned, actually fearful, about the status of academic freedom and free speech at George Mason should the proposed "antisemitism" resolution succeed. I know it would have a chilling effect on those speaking out for peace and justice in the Middle East--is, indeed, calculated to suppress this speech. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to vote NO on the BOV resolution.  |
| Tyler Martinez                 | Student                       | I strongly oppose the BOV motion to alter the definition of antisemitism at GMU to include the IHRA working definition of antisemitism. The policies of the state of Israel are not equivalent to the views of all Jewish people. I encourage the board to vote no on the antisemitism resolution,.   |
| Michele Ren                    | Faculty at Radford University | As a Jewish person myself, I understand that ZIONIST does not apply to me and does NOT stand in for "Jewish." Please do not curtail free speech in this way.  |
| Jake Fox                       | Resident of Virginia          | I'm writing to urge the GMU Board of Visitors to reconsider the current resolution defining antisemitic speech on campus. Antisemitism is repugnant. However, the ambiguity of language defining "proxy" verbiage is unclear and represents a threat to important speech on a campus. Please vote "no" on the resolution, and pursue a longer discussion to develop clear standards on discriminatory speech that will not have a chilling effect on important speech. Thank you!   |
| Paul Thomas                    | A concerned person            | Please vote no on the BOV antisemitism resolution. The resolution provides no mechanism for determining when "Zion" and "Zionism" are deemed as proxies for Jewish. The creates the opportunity for inaccurate and arbitrary enforcement of the policy. Note also that no government should be immune from criticisms for its policies. Efforts like this are meant to shield Israeli government from criticism by deeming such criticism as antisemitic.   |
| Stockton Maxwell               | Community Member              | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution. Antisemitism should not be supported but the resolution may unintentionally restrict free speech or allow the university to restrict criticism of political positions in the US and abroad.  |
| Jae-Lynn Tavarez Brown         | Student                       | <p>DEAR BOV, BOT, GMU ADMIN,</p> <p>We are writing to you on behalf of the student body at George Mason University (GMU) to demand immediate action regarding the ethical implications of the University's investment practices. Specifically, we urge you to disclose and reconsider investments tied to companies or entities implicated in human rights violations against civilians, and take steps to ensure that GMU's investments align with its mission and core values.</p> <p>As stated in the university's mission, "the pressures we face today may be different from the past, but our core values remain the same and continue to guide our actions." These values—putting our students first, striving for innovation, acting as careful stewards, nurturing collaboration, embracing diversity, honoring freedom of thought, and acting with integrity—are the foundation of our identity as a community. GMU has long prided itself on its commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards in education and scholarship. It is within this framework that we must evaluate the ethical implications of the university's financial decisions and contributors.</p> <p>In light of these core values, we call on the Board to conduct and disclose a thorough and transparent review of the University's investment portfolio to identify and divest from any holdings linked to companies or entities that are complicit in human rights violations against civilians. This includes, but is not limited to, companies involved in the production of weapons or military equipment used in violent conflict zones where civilians are targeted and oppressed. We believe that review and divestment from these entities is not only a moral imperative but also crucial to maintaining the integrity and reputation of GMU as an institution that upholds the principles of justice, humanity, and ethical conduct.</p> <p>This issue is not theoretical; as the most diverse institution in the Commonwealth, GMU is home to students whose identities and experiences span the globe, including in regions where human rights violations persist as a harsh reality. Their families are facing genocides and violent conflict in Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other areas of violent conflict around the world, often in direct proximity to the entities that profit from the violence. These students, who already carry the emotional weight of their loved</p> |

ones' safety on a daily basis, are forced to contend with the knowledge that the institution they attend is complicit in the perpetuation of these harms. They wake up each day worrying whether their family members have been caught in airstrikes or forced into displacement, while simultaneously navigating the challenges of their academic pursuits. This emotional and psychological toll is compounded by the alienation they experience on campus, where they are confronted with the disconnect between GMU's values and its financial, and institutional practices.

The potential consequences of inaction are profound. Alumni, faculty staff, students, and friends of the GMU community contributed over \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to the University, and we have concerns that the future of these contributions will be threatened as the GMU community becomes increasingly aware of the ethical concerns surrounding the university's investments and contributions from companies actively complicit in human rights abuses against civilians. Current and future alumni play a great role in the success and development of this university, but many, including our current matriculating student population, do not want to fund an institution that remains silent in the face of genocide and continues to work with corporations that are exacerbating it. This is reflective of the coalition of student organizations that have coalesced around this letter and its demands. The university's failure to act in this matter risks alienating the very community it seeks to engage and

Isabelle Eker Student

DEAR BOV, BOT, GMU ADMIN,

We are writing to you on behalf of the student body at George Mason University (GMU) to demand immediate action regarding the ethical implications of the University's investment practices. Specifically, we urge you to disclose and reconsider investments tied to companies or entities implicated in human rights violations against civilians, and take steps to ensure that GMU's investments align with its mission and core values.

As stated in the university's mission, "the pressures we face today may be different from the past, but our core values remain the same and continue to guide our actions." These values—putting our students first, striving for innovation, acting as careful stewards, nurturing collaboration, embracing diversity, honoring freedom of thought, and acting with integrity—are the foundation of our identity as a community. GMU has long prided itself on its commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards in education and scholarship. It is within this framework that we must evaluate the ethical implications of the university's financial decisions and contributors.

In light of these core values, we call on the Board to conduct and disclose a thorough and transparent review of the University's investment portfolio to identify and divest from any holdings linked to companies or entities that are complicit in human rights violations against civilians. This includes, but is not limited to, companies involved in the production of weapons or military equipment used in violent conflict zones where civilians are targeted and oppressed. We believe that review and divestment from these entities is not only a moral imperative but also crucial to maintaining the integrity and reputation of GMU as an institution that upholds the principles of justice, humanity, and ethical conduct.

This issue is not theoretical; as the most diverse institution in the Commonwealth, GMU is home to students whose identities and experiences span the globe, including in regions where human rights violations persist as a harsh reality. Their families are facing genocides and violent conflict in Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other areas of violent conflict around the world, often in direct proximity to the entities that profit from the violence. These students, who already carry the emotional weight of their loved ones' safety on a daily basis, are forced to contend with the knowledge that the institution they attend is complicit in the perpetuation of these harms. They wake up each day worrying whether their family members have been caught in airstrikes or forced into displacement, while simultaneously navigating the challenges of their academic pursuits. This emotional and psychological toll is compounded by the alienation they experience on campus, where they are confronted with the disconnect between GMU's values and its financial, and institutional practices.

The potential consequences of inaction are profound. Alumni, faculty staff, students, and friends of the GMU community contributed over \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to the University, and we have concerns that the future of these contributions will be threatened as the GMU community becomes increasingly aware of the ethical concerns surrounding the university's investments and contributions from companies actively complicit in human rights abuses against civilians. Current and future alumni play a great role in the success and development of this university, but many, including our current matriculating student population, do not want to fund an institution that remains silent in the face of genocide and continues to work with corporations that are exacerbating it. This is reflective of the coalition of student organizations that have coalesced around this letter and its demands.

Bruna Laurent Student

DEAR BOV, BOT, GMU ADMIN,

We are writing to you on behalf of the student body at George Mason University (GMU) to demand immediate action regarding the ethical implications of the University's investment practices. Specifically, we urge you to disclose and reconsider investments tied to companies or entities implicated in human rights violations against civilians, and take steps to ensure that GMU's investments align with its mission and core values.

As stated in the university's mission, "the pressures we face today may be different from the past, but our core values remain the same and continue to guide our actions." These values—putting our students first, striving for innovation, acting as careful stewards, nurturing collaboration, embracing diversity, honoring freedom of thought, and acting with integrity—are the foundation of our identity as a community. GMU has long prided itself on its commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards in education and scholarship. It is within this framework that we must evaluate the ethical implications of the university's financial decisions and contributors.

In light of these core values, we call on the Board to conduct and disclose a thorough and transparent review of the University's investment portfolio to identify and divest from any holdings linked to companies or entities that are complicit in human rights violations against civilians. This includes, but is not limited to, companies involved in the

production of weapons or military equipment used in violent conflict zones where civilians are targeted and oppressed. We believe that review and divestment from these entities is not only a moral imperative but also crucial to maintaining the integrity and reputation of GMU as an institution that upholds the principles of justice, humanity, and ethical conduct.

This issue is not theoretical; as the most diverse institution in the Commonwealth, GMU is home to students whose identities and experiences span the globe, including in regions where human rights violations persist as a harsh reality. Their families are facing genocides and violent conflict in Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other areas of violent conflict around the world, often in direct proximity to the entities that profit from the violence. These students, who already carry the emotional weight of their loved ones' safety on a daily basis, are forced to contend with the knowledge that the institution they attend is complicit in the perpetuation of these harms. They wake up each day worrying whether their family members have been caught in airstrikes or forced into displacement, while simultaneously navigating the challenges of their academic pursuits. This emotional and psychological toll is compounded by the alienation they experience on campus, where they are confronted with the disconnect between GMU's values and its financial, and institutional practices.

The potential consequences of inaction are profound. Alumni, faculty staff, students, and friends of the GMU community contributed over \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to the University, and we have concerns that the future of these contributions will be threatened as the GMU community becomes increasingly aware of the ethical concerns surrounding the university's investments and contributions from companies actively complicit in human rights abuses against civilians. Current and future alumni play a great role in the success and development of this university, but many, including our current matriculating student population, do not want to fund an institution that remains silent in the face of genocide and continues to work with corporations that are exacerbating it. This is reflective of the coalition of student organizations that have coalesced around this letter and its demands.

|                   |                   |   |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| Michael Friedman  | Concerned citizen | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Marlia Abongnelah | Student           | <p>DEAR BOV, BOT, GMU ADMIN,</p> <p>We are writing to you on behalf of the student body at George Mason University (GMU) to demand immediate action regarding the ethical implications of the University's investment practices. Specifically, we urge you to disclose and reconsider investments tied to companies or entities implicated in human rights violations against civilians, and take steps to ensure that GMU's investments align with its mission and core values.</p> <p>As stated in the university's mission, "the pressures we face today may be different from the past, but our core values remain the same and continue to guide our actions." These values—putting our students first, striving for innovation, acting as careful stewards, nurturing collaboration, embracing diversity, honoring freedom of thought, and acting with integrity—are the foundation of our identity as a community. GMU has long prided itself on its commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards in education and scholarship. It is within this framework that we must evaluate the ethical implications of the university's financial decisions and contributors.</p> <p>In light of these core values, we call on the Board to conduct and disclose a thorough and transparent review of the University's investment portfolio to identify and divest from any holdings linked to companies or entities that are complicit in human rights violations against civilians. This includes, but is not limited to, companies involved in the production of weapons or military equipment used in violent conflict zones where civilians are targeted and oppressed. We believe that review and divestment from these entities is not only a moral imperative but also crucial to maintaining the integrity and reputation of GMU as an institution that upholds the principles of justice, humanity, and ethical conduct.</p> <p>This issue is not theoretical; as the most diverse institution in the Commonwealth, GMU is home to students whose identities and experiences span the globe, including in regions where human rights violations persist as a harsh reality. Their families are facing genocides and violent conflict in Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other areas of violent conflict around the world, often in direct proximity to the entities that profit from the violence. These students, who already carry the emotional weight of their loved ones' safety on a daily basis, are forced to contend with the knowledge that the institution they attend is complicit in the perpetuation of these harms. They wake up each day worrying whether their family members have been caught in</p> |

|                           |  |  |
|---------------------------|--|--|
|                           |  | <p>airstrikes or forced into displacement, while simultaneously navigating the challenges of their academic pursuits. This emotional and psychological toll is compounded by the alienation they experience on campus, where they are confronted with the disconnect between GMU's values and its financial, and institutional practices.</p> <p>The potential consequences of inaction are profound. Alumni, faculty staff, students, and friends of the GMU community contributed over \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to the University, and we have concerns that the future of these contributions will be threatened as the GMU community becomes increasingly aware of the ethical concerns surrounding the university's investments and contributions from companies actively complicit in human rights abuses against civilians. Current and future alumni play a great role in the success and development of this university, but many, including our current matriculating student population, do not want to fund an institution that remains silent in the face of genocide and continues to work with corporations that are exacerbating it. This is reflective of the coalition of student organizations that have coalesced around this letter and its demands. The university's failure to act in this matter risks alienating the very community it seeks to engage and s</p>  |
| Marlia Abongnelah         | Student  | <p>The potential consequences of inaction are profound. Alumni, faculty staff, students, and friends of the GMU community contributed over \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to the University, and we have concerns that the future of these contributions will be threatened as the GMU community becomes increasingly aware of the ethical concerns surrounding the university's investments and contributions from companies actively complicit in human rights abuses against civilians. Current and future alumni play a great role in the success and development of this university, but many, including our current matriculating student population, do not want to fund an institution that remains silent in the face of genocide and continues to work with corporations that are exacerbating it. This is reflective of the coalition of student organizations that have coalesced around this letter and its demands. The university's failure to act in this matter risks alienating the very community it seeks to engage and support.</p> <p>We understand that disclosure decisions are complex and multifaceted. As such, we are writing to urge the Board to prioritize this matter and extend ourselves and members of the student community to engage with the Board in reviewing how our University's ethical guidelines are being upheld, and we wish to stress the importance of a transparent process of review and reform in actualizing our University's mission and core values.</p> <p>As students who have made an academic, professional, and financial investment in this institution, we feel as though it is our right to understand who is investing in our community. The voices of GMU's student body are united in this call for action, and we are more than willing to engage in further discussions or offer support in working towards these goals. It is imperative that we address this issue with urgency and commitment, fostering an environment where ethical practices are at the forefront of development, and student voices are centered in the expansion and sustenance of the George Mason University community.</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>GMU STUDENTS</p> |
| Anonymous                 | Concerned American   | Please do not punish students for protesting the Palestinian genocide. It is never too late to support restorative justice for victims of genocide. It is morally right to oppose such atrocities.   |
| Evelyn Mirabel Hogan-Hunt | Student  | Comments sent via email.   |
| Elizabeth smith           |  | I have read books published by your professors.  |
| Michael Gordon            | Community Member   | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| David Finkel              | I am the managing editor of the social justice journal AGAINST THE CURRENT againstthecurrent.org | Suspending students and organizations that speak up for Palestinian rights has nothing to do with combating antisemitism. It's an attack of freedom of speech, the right to organize, and the human rights of all people. The suspensions of students and organizations must be rescinded immediately.   |
| Mary Jo Baumann           | Community Member   | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of first amendment rights.</p> <p>Institutions of higher education should foster environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression".</p> <p>This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should</p>  |

|                            |  |   |
|----------------------------|--|---|
|                            |  | <p>uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal. It breaks my heart to think that you are enabling the fascist agenda of the current political administration!</p> <p>Sincerely,<br/>MJ Baumann</p>  |
| Nadia Behizadeh            | Concerned member of the academy  | <p>As a professor, I have serious concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors. This proposal would criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and foster environments where diverse perspectives can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression. This proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights.</p>  |
| Taylor T.                  | Repro justice advocate   | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors to use fear to criminalize and punish all criticism of Zionism on campus. As a Jew who rejects and actively criticizes Zionism, it's clear that this is an attempt to shut down free speech, violate first amendment rights, and target organizing and solidarity with people asking for an end to apartheid. It's outrageous. Higher education has a tremendous role to play in pushing back against repression and should seek, especially in this moment of anticipatory of obedience to fascism, represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides and markets itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments.</p> <p>Any good historian of Zionism, who studies its foundational texts such as Herzl and Jabotinsky along with its concurrent opposition when it was growing its movement, can see its colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. It's in the archives. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Karla Rosales-Barrios      | Ally and Activist  | <p>How is it even remotely possible that in 2025, we continue to have to fight for the right for freedom of expression, free speech, and the duty to resist the powers that be without being targeted and silenced via censorship? It is even more outrageous that the argument is based on the false premise that any person who challenges, questions, or speaks out against the horrors subjugated people, in this particular case, Palestinian people living under a Zionist anti-Muslim occupation! Our United States government has spent billions of tax payer dollars to fund horror, death, destruction and we not only have the right but the duty to speak out! This act has zero to do with anti-semitism and it is simply outrageous that any institution of higher learning has the gumption to shut down dissent and conflate it with anti-semitism. How dare you. Protect Free Speech. Protect Freedom of Thought and Expression. Protect students' rights to use their voice and intellect to bring different perspectives to the myriad of issues. Stand up for all students' rights!</p>   |
| Sharon Wheeler             | Community Member   | <p>At some point, which is rapidly approaching,, you cease to be a University and become a diploma factory, not even competitive with on-line diploma mills.</p> <p>At the very least, look at the works of Jewish scholars,. Shame on you for celebrating ignorance.</p>   |
| Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos | prof emerita, Northern Mich University: wrote numerous letters of recommendations for students seeking admission to George Mason | <p>I am Jewish, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, a former resident of Israel, and I stand in COMPLETE OPPOSITION to the IHRA definition of anti-semitism. This definition equates anti-semitism and anti-zionism and should therefore never be used as a measure for determining whether an action or words are anti-Jewish. In fact, this definition should be deplored. To be anti-zionist does not mean one is anti-semitic. In fact, hundreds of thousands of Jews are, like myself, anti-zionist. Anyone deserves the right to criticize Zionism, to criticize Israeli policies and conduct. The exercise of this right does not mean one is anti-semitic. I hope I have been as clear as possible here.</p>   |
| Lillian Leibel             | Student  | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing today in opposition to a resolution before George Mason University's Board of Visitors that aims to ban criticism of Zionism, a political ideology, on GMU campuses. This resolution is a blatant assault on free speech, as well as a silencing tactic directed towards the pro-Palestinian movement. It undermines the diversity of thought and people that GMU prides itself on, and undermines GMU as an institution for higher education. Zionism is a political</p>  |



|                         |  |  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Nancy L. Wallace Nelson | concerned US citizen who believe in First Amendment rights | <p>ideology detached from religion. Zionism is not equivalent to Judaism, and criticism of a national state's ideology does not equate to hate speech. As someone with Jewish loved ones, this false equivalency does more to endanger Jewish lives by equivocating Judaism with a violent, colonialist ideology and apartheid state. As a GMU student, it frightens me that my university would limit free speech and debate, the very thing that universities are supposed to foster. Anti-zionist speech and pro-Palestinian protest are not hate speech, period. In addition, this resolution is an extension of the Right's attack on education. If pro-Palestinian students are not safe from censorship, who is? Will LGBTQIA+ books be next, or classes on critical race theory? This is the goal of the extreme Rightwing party that is currently occupying the highest parts of our United States government. I urge you, as a passionate student at GMU, the university I've come to love, to please oppose this resolution.</p> <p>I am shocked and alarmed that your well-regarded educational institute is shutting down all pro-Palestinian commentary, and endangering the freedom of speech that should be protected by higher education. First of all, being pro-Palestinian is NOT antisemitic. Palestinians ARE Semites, so that IDF actions against Palestinians ARE themselves antisemitic. Secondly, if you study the Torah which teaches that all beings are the face of God, you know Israeli assault on Gaza this past year is NOT Judaism. It is political, and is illegal by all international standards. If you want to read good information for further education, please have your entire board read "Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza Reckoning" by Peter Beinart.</p> <p>Meanwhile, I hope that you will NOT comply with any of Trump's poorly-written ICE orders regarding your foreign students. You owe ALL of your students protection. Emergency alerts should be issued to all students if an ICE raid does happen. And "know your rights" campus workshops are imminently necessary right now.</p> <p>Sincerely, Nancy Wallace Nelson</p> |
| Kathy Bartolomeo        | Community Member   | <p>We need to protect all our students. Let them know when ICE is on campus. Teach everyone to know their rights. Training must be provided. Also, please train the Title 6 officers as to what the difference is between antisemitism and anti-zionism. We all should have the right to dissent. Alumni need to be heard for their concerns in protecting all students.</p>   |
| Cortney Green           | Alumni   | I do not accept this as it threatens academic freedom.   |
| Alexandra Davidson      | Alumni   | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As a proud Jewish alumni (MS, Conflict Analysis and Resolution, 2007) I'm writing to you because Mason means so much to me and I my own education at Mason would have been much lesser were this policy in place when I was a student.</p> <p>I am writing to express my concern about the proposal for Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus.</p> <p>I'm concerned about its impact on free speech and that it violates students first amendment rights. Colleges need to be about tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive.</p> <p>Mason prides itself on its diverse student population yet this proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every person to learn diverse perspectives and to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>Please consider the grave consequences of this proposal. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, Alexandra Davidson, MS 2007</p>   |
| Sky Minkoff             | Community Member   | <p>Greetings,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our First Amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression. Intellectual freedom is a fundamental component of institutions of higher learning.</p> <p>Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. As a Jewish student, I affirm that zionism is fundamentally violent, racist, eugenicist, and genocidal. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". Equating zionism with Judaism is an attack on Jewish people, especially the &gt;50% of Jewish college students who oppose the violence and racism of zionism.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>   |
| Patricia Korey          | Community Member   | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would</p>  |

|                 |                       |   |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---|
|                 |                       | <p>aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Ali Mili        | Community Member      | if free speech is not protected in academia, where can it be?   |
| Dolores Pino    | Civil Rights Attorney | <p>February 26, 2025</p> <p>To Board, Faculty, Administrators of George Mason:</p> <p>As a Practicing Attorney in the Civil Rights field, I am very concerned to learn of Jeff Rosen’s misguided proposal that would criminalize criticism of Zionism on the George Mason campus.</p> <p>This very misguided proposal would needlessly restrict free speech and is a gross violation of every student’s First Amendment constitutional rights.</p> <p>Institutions of higher education, including George Mason, MUST stand up for tolerance and growth, and promote learning environments on campus with thriving, diverse perspectives, ideas and identities.</p> <p>This very misguided proposal would needlessly censor important criticism of Zionism within all University departments.</p> <p>Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is false, and harms the fundamental free speech and free thought rights of all persons on campus.</p> <p>I very strongly urge you to reject this very misguided proposal as obviously violative of the essential, fundamental right to free speech for all.</p> <p>George Mason should promote critical thinking for all, not censor criticism of "Zionism" or criticism of a state's lethal violence against persons within its territory, e.g., Israel's illegal military operations, Genocide of, and system of Apartheid against the non-Jewish people living in illegally occupied Palestine.</p>  |
| Polly Parkinson | Community Member      | <p>I am deeply concerned about Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of first amendment rights. Do you realize that almost half of all Jews do not support Zionism? Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Please uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression. Students and community members should be able to exercise free speech without being labeled criminals. Please protect free speech on campus by not adopting the Rosen proposal. Thank you</p>   |
| Nada Moustafa   | Student               | <p>DEAR BOV, BOT, GMU ADMIN,</p> <p>We are writing to you on behalf of the student body at George Mason University (GMU) to demand immediate action regarding the ethical implications of the University’s investment practices. Specifically, we urge you to disclose and reconsider investments tied to companies or entities implicated in human rights violations against civilians, and take steps to ensure that GMU’s investments align with its mission and core values.</p> <p>As stated in the university’s mission, "the pressures we face today may be different from the past, but our core values remain the same and continue to guide our actions." These values—putting our students first, striving for innovation, acting as careful stewards, nurturing collaboration, embracing diversity, honoring freedom of thought, and acting with integrity—are the foundation of our identity as a community. GMU has long prided itself on its commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards in education and scholarship. It is within this framework that we must evaluate the ethical implications of the university’s financial decisions and contributors.</p> <p>In light of these core values, we call on the Board to conduct and disclose a thorough and transparent review of the University’s investment portfolio to identify and divest from any holdings linked to companies or entities that are complicit in human rights violations against civilians. This includes, but is not limited to, companies involved in the production of weapons or military equipment used in violent conflict zones where civilians are targeted and oppressed. We believe that review and divestment from these entities is not only a moral imperative but also crucial</p>  |

|                 |                       |  |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
|                 |                       | <p>to maintaining the integrity and reputation of GMU as an institution that upholds the principles of justice, humanity, and ethical conduct.</p> <p>This issue is not theoretical; as the most diverse institution in the Commonwealth, GMU is home to students whose identities and experiences span the globe, including in regions where human rights violations persist as a harsh reality. Their families are facing genocides and violent conflict in Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other areas of violent conflict around the world, often in direct proximity to the entities that profit from the violence. These students, who already carry the emotional weight of their loved ones' safety on a daily basis, are forced to contend with the knowledge that the institution they attend is complicit in the perpetuation of these harms. They wake up each day worrying whether their family members have been caught in airstrikes or forced into displacement, while simultaneously navigating the challenges of their academic pursuits. This emotional and psychological toll is compounded by the alienation they experience on campus, where they are confronted with the disconnect between GMU's values and its financial, and institutional practices.</p> <p>The potential consequences of inaction are profound. Alumni, faculty staff, students, and friends of the GMU community contributed over \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to the University, and we have concerns that the future of these contributions will be threatened as the GMU community becomes increasingly aware of the ethical concerns surrounding the university's investments and contributions from companies actively complicit in human rights abuses against civilians. Current and future alumni play a great role in the success and development of this university, but many, including our current matriculating student population, do not want to fund an institution that remains silent in the face of genocide and continues to work with corporations that are exacerbating it. This is reflective of the coalition of student organizations that have coalesced around this letter and its demands. The university's failure to act in this matter risks alienating the very community it seeks to engage and s</p> |
| Dolores Pino    | Civil Rights Attorney | <p>February 26, 2025</p> <p>To George Mason Administration:</p> <p>Part Two of my comment submission today</p> <p>Here is my suggestion for what you should do instead of restricting people's right to free speech on campus:</p>   |
| Gregory Perkins | Community Member      | <p>I am compelled to present my concerns in regard a proposal by Mr. Jeff Rosen to Board of Visitors of George Mason University attempting to criminalize all criticism of the Netanyahu government or Zionism at the school. I consider this to be an dangerous assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Higher education should foster diverse perspectives and ideas. Universities have a crucial responsibility to their students and community to uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression. George Mason cannot claim to uphold and promote student and faculty diversity while persecuting or marginalizing GMU students for their unpopular opinions or criticism of prevailing political policies.</p> <p>Rosen's proposal attempts to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is cynical and intellectually and morally dishonest. This intentionally dishonest view is an attack on the many Jews who oppose Zionism or the policies of the Israeli government as well as a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students. It violates the constitutional rights of all members of the community to free expression. Universities have an obligation to uplift divergent voices.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Dolores Pino    | Civil Rights Attorney | <p>Part Two of my submission today:</p> <p>Instead of restricting free speech on campus by falsely conflating anti-zionism with "anti-semitism," please hold a week or week-end long, campus-wide and community-wide, educational teach-in on the history of "Israel"/occupied Palestine, for students and community, including showings of the excellent, highly informative, 4-part documentary film titled, "Al-Nakba," Parts 1 -4, as well as the excellent 2012 documentary film titled, "Roadmap to Apartheid," narrated by Alice Walker.</p> <p>Here are links to these excellent, important documentary films:</p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7FML0wzJ6A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7FML0wzJ6A</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI2D5Fsd9Ilg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI2D5Fsd9Ilg</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SKECsemmaA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SKECsemmaA</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0m__A7MIDrk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0m__A7MIDrk</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2124900/">https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2124900/</a></p> <p>Thank you very much for your time and attention to this important matter.</p>   |



|                     |                                     |  |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Anne Erde           | Interested retired professor        | Our job as teachers is to support free speech and help our students work through complex issues. Please stand up for your students, faculty and staff. Thank you.  |
| Marta Guttenberg MD | Community Member                    | Universities have in loco parentis obligations towards students.<br><br>Choosing to suspend or punish students for First Amendment protected activities and, intentionally or not, placing them at risk for homelessness, arrest, visa loss, or possible deportation is a blatant violation.<br><br>Return to the tradition of Alma Mater that has characterized GMU heretofore.   |
| Lauren Cattaneo     | Faculty                             | As a Jewish faculty member, I strongly oppose the resolution related to antisemitism that is to be considered at the Feb 27 BOV meeting. I believe that the resolution threatens academic freedom, and that in the end it actually exacerbates the vulnerability of Jewish students, staff, and faculty.<br><br>First, the IHRA definition of antisemitism is overly broad. As such, it risks targeting those who are engaging in debate or education related to the complex issues in Israel and Palestine; this risk not only threatens academic freedom, but it also is likely to have a chilling effect on exactly the kind of conversations and education that are desperately needed around these topics. The IHRA definition was never meant to be applied in this way, as its authors have made clear. Whatever the intentions behind it, I believe the resolution will lead to the targeting of speech that is not only allowed, not only protected, but is vital for the very cause the resolution purports to advance.<br><br>Second, as a Jewish person, I strenuously disagree with the resolution's singling out of antisemitism as distinct from other forms of discrimination against marginalized groups. This singling out is particularly glaring at a time when initiatives combatting discrimination against other marginalized groups are actively under threat. I believe that Jewish students, faculty and staff should be protected alongside – not over and above – students, faculty and staff with other minoritized racial, ethnic and religious identities. These efforts should be combined and connected, and any educational or informational materials should discuss the issues in tandem.<br><br>I believe elevating the safety of Jewish people over and above other minoritized groups is not only morally wrong, but that in the end it serves only to isolate, further marginalize and open the Jewish people to more attack. I would like to see anti-discrimination resolutions and educational materials that include Jewish people alongside other groups that have historically been targets of discrimination, including, among others, Muslim students, faculty, and staff.<br><br>Along these lines, I strongly agreed with the statement of the graduate student representative, Carolyn Faith Hoffman, who at the 2/13 BOV meeting highlighted the need to address the rise in antisemitism since October 7, but argued that the resolution will only "further division and misunderstanding of the Jewish people."<br><br>That is the last thing we need.<br><br>Please reject this resolution. |
| Aeris Phan          | Student                             | Comment was sent via email with aphan33@gmu.edu  |
| X. Amy Zhang        | Faculty                             | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Shane Porambo       | Washington State resident           | Yes, I just like to say that I support students to have the full right of expressing their freedom of speech on your campus without any retaliation.<br><br>I have watched over the last year and a half many acts of war and I am hoping that US can use it's strength to bring peace, prosperity and hopefulness wherever it goes. I'm also praying daily for peace on both sides of the conflict that surrounds Palestine.<br><br>Sincerely yours,<br><br>Shane Porambo   |
| Rana Saed           | Retired communications professional | To whom it may concern,<br><br>As an American, I am horrified to have to write this letter.<br><br>The year is 2025.<br><br>We are in the United States of America. The only nation in the world that has speech protections under the First Amendment and yet here we are. Witnessing live before our eyes the fragility of this amendment and where? On academic campuses of all places!<br><br>The very spaces where free speech should be honored, endorsed and protected. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.<br><br>I'm deeply concerned regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights.<br><br>Is this what we have become as a nation? Is this what American academia is heading towards?<br><br>Does George Mason university value Israel more than its own students? Does it value Israel more than our First   |

|                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
|                |  | <p>Amendment? Does it value Israel more than the right of students to speak up against injustices? And finally, this question that should make you think deeply. Do you accept that students who speak up for Palestine deserve to be protected on your campus?</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. Moreover, this will dilute real anti-semitism making universities less, not more, safe for Jewish students.</p> <p>This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Rosemarie Pace | Peace activist, former college professor | <p>I am horrified to read about George Mason's (and so many other institutions of higher education) disgraceful position regarding Palestine and antisemitism. Believing in the humanity of Palestinians and opposing the genocide by Israel against Palestinians is NOT antisemitic. It is far more antisemitic to defend the barbarism of Israel toward its Palestinian residents and neighbors. Rightfully criticizing 76 years of occupation, oppression, death, and destruction is the only moral thing to do anywhere and anytime. You should be a leader in defending free speech and academic freedom and in promoting basic human decency rather than a defender of censorship and bigotry. Show some courage and basic morality. I know money talks and you're probably looking more to the mighty dollar than human rights, but that great American way must come to an end, and you can help make that happen right now. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.</p>  |
| Sherry Paris   | Community Member                         | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a violation of first amendment rights. Protect free speech. Do not suppress speech or repress protest.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Rachel Jones   | Faculty                                  | <p>I write as a faculty member who has taken Mason students on educational visits to the Ravensbrück and Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial sites, and who teaches material that explores questions of remembrance, memorialization, and bearing witness in relation to the genocide of the Jewish people perpetrated by the Nazi regime, as well as its genocidal killing of other groups including the Roma and Sinti peoples and those deemed sexually deviant, and the torture and killing of peoples with disabilities. It is because I work with students on these issues that I strongly oppose the proposal to frame Mason's institutional approach to antisemitism on the basis of the IHRA Working Definition.</p> <p>The equivocation between antisemitism and criticisms of the actions and policies of the state of Israel in the IHRA definition creates a climate of fear, in which those who wish to be actively involved in combatting antisemitism yet who may also wish to raise criticisms of the actions and policies of the state of Israel are less likely to speak up and participate, lest merely raising such criticisms exposes them to the charge of antisemitism and potential disciplinary action.</p> <p>Silencing, excluding or quietening such voices represents a serious loss to the ongoing work of tackling antisemitism. Its chilling effect works directly against the kinds of nuanced and complex conversations that are needed to educate about antisemitism, its long history and continued present, and to allow our students to work through these issues in informed and ethically responsive ways in the kinds of conversations that so many of our colleagues - and our students - here at Mason are adept at facilitating.</p> <p>For sure, the IHRA definition leaves room for interpretation of individual acts and speech, but this is also what contributes to the uncertainty and fear: the alignment between antisemitism and criticisms of the actions and policies of the state of Israel (as well as critiques of Zionism) at multiple points in the definition produces the impression that any such criticisms are likely to be equated with antisemitism. Thus, when those who wish to raise such criticisms do speak, they are more likely to begin from a defensive position, feeling the need to prove they are not antisemitic before they can contribute. This is particularly silencing for members of our community who wish to support Palestinian rights while also standing against antisemitism. It is not conducive to creating an inclusive environment for meaningful campus conversations.</p> <p>The proposed resolution amounts to an anti-discrimination policy that produces its own silences and exclusions. Furthermore, tasking Mason's office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion with embedding the IHRA definition across the University's operations when other modes of discrimination are not addressed in similarly extensive ways sends a message that other forms of discrimination are not as important. It is not helpful to generate policies that create a hierarchy of discriminations or exclusions.</p> <p>In the preface to "If This is a Man," Primo Levi suggests that, when carried through to its logical conclusion, the</p> |

|                     |                      |   |
|---------------------|----------------------|---|
|                     |                      | <p>premise that “every stranger is an enemy” results in the concentration camps. To fully dismantle this logic, we need to contest it wherever it manifests and whomever it is directed against. We did in fact have a Mason Core (‘social justice’) category that would have been a good place to address differing forms of discrimination and exclusion, including but not only as they manifest in antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism, without hierarchizing or equating them and with an attentiveness to their specificities and their sometimes overlapping histories. Again, Mason faculty and students are adept at navigating such complexities. It would be helpful if the BOV would help us to preserve and nurture the space for such truly inclusive and transformatory educational conversations.</p>  |
| Samantha Parsons    | Alumni Class of 2016 | <p>Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason! Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution! The resolution emphasizes the protection of First Amendment rights while also directing the University to apply the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which has been criticized for potentially limiting speech critical of Israel. The resolution states that it will use IHRA as a “tool and guide,” but also directs the University to track and report incidents based on it, raising concerns about whether speech will be policed in a way that could infringe on academic freedom and free expression. No public university should be policing critical thinking in this way!</p>   |
| Catherine Saunders  | Faculty              | <p>Please vote “no” on the BOV resolution on anti-Semitism. While it is important to protect all members of the university community from harassment based on protected characteristics, the provisions in this resolution seem unlikely to achieve that purpose. If you feel that the anti-bias training and other educational efforts directed at specific portions of the university community need to be strengthened, then I suggest that you direct the professional staff charged with creating such training and educational materials to create additional materials that address a broad range of possible expressions of bias rather than singling out any particular protected group or subgroup. That approach would be more effective, and would encourage all involved in the production of such materials to think about how to protect the expression of a variety of possibly-controversial viewpoints.</p> <p>Alternatively (and I think better), I hope the BOV will consider sponsoring opportunities for students faculty, staff, and BOV members to gain experience in discussing difficult topics in a productive manner. That strikes me as far more likely to reduce campus tensions and increase understanding than the activities mandated in the present resolution.</p>   |
| Isabella Majarowitz | Student              | <p>Dear Board of Visitors, Board of Trustees, and GMU Administrators,</p> <p>We are writing to you on behalf of the student body at George Mason University (GMU) to demand immediate action regarding the ethical implications of the University’s investment practices. Specifically, we urge you to disclose and reconsider investments tied to companies or entities implicated in human rights violations against civilians, and take steps to ensure that GMU’s investments align with its mission and core values.</p> <p>As stated in the university’s mission, “the pressures we face today may be different from the past, but our core values remain the same and continue to guide our actions.” These values—putting our students first, striving for innovation, acting as careful stewards, nurturing collaboration, embracing diversity, honoring freedom of thought, and acting with integrity—are the foundation of our identity as a community. GMU has long prided itself on its commitment to uphold the highest ethical standards in education and scholarship. It is within this framework that we must evaluate the ethical implications of the university’s financial decisions and contributors.</p> <p>In light of these core values, we call on the Board to conduct and disclose a thorough and transparent review of the University’s investment portfolio to identify and divest from any holdings linked to companies or entities that are complicit in human rights violations against civilians. This includes, but is not limited to, companies involved in the production of weapons or military equipment used in violent conflict zones where civilians are targeted and oppressed. We believe that review and divestment from these entities is not only a moral imperative but also crucial to maintaining the integrity and reputation of GMU as an institution that upholds the principles of justice, humanity, and diversity.</p> <p>This issue is not theoretical; as the most diverse institution in the Commonwealth, GMU is home to students whose identities and experiences span the globe, including in regions where human rights violations persist as a harsh reality. Their families are facing genocides and violent conflict in Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other areas facing violent conflict around the world, often in direct proximity to the entities that profit from the violence. These students, who already carry the emotional weight of their loved ones’ safety on a daily basis, are forced to contend with the knowledge that the institution they attend is complicit in the perpetuation of these harms. They wake up each day worrying whether their family members have been caught in airstrikes or forced into displacement, while simultaneously navigating the challenges of college. This emotional and psychological toll is compounded by the alienation they experience on campus, where they are confronted with the disconnect between GMU’s values and its financial, and institutional practices.</p> <p>The potential consequences of inaction are profound. Alumni, faculty staff, students, and friends of the GMU community contributed over \$26 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to the University, and we have concerns that the future of these contributions will be threatened as the GMU community becomes increasingly aware of the ethical concerns surrounding the university’s investments and contributions from companies actively complicit in human rights abuses against civilians. Current and future alumni play a great role in the success and development of this university, but many, including our current matriculating student population, do not want to fund an institution that remains silent in the face of genocide and continues to work with corporations that are exacerbating it. This is reflective of the coalition of student organizations that have coalesced around this letter and its demands. We are more than willing to engage in further discussions.</p> <p>Thank you,<br/>GMU Students</p> |

|                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| Robert Malone  | Community Member                             | I am writing out of concern regarding the proposed adoption by the University of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. I feel that this overly broad definition can be used to sanction members of the University community who express support for the rights of Palestinians and/or criticism of the Israeli Government. Although the proposed resolution expresses support for free speech such definitions of antisemitism have been used to suppress pro-Palestinian expression elsewhere. At the very least it can chill such speech by self-censorship on the part of those who don't want to be labeled racist. But racism can also be directed toward Arab peoples and we must be as sensitive to that as we are to racism toward Jews. I hope the BOV will refrain from taking this unnecessary action. Thank you.   |
| Shawn Loescher | Family friend of a student                   | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As a retired military between I am writing to express my grave concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech rights guaranteed in the US Constitution that I swore to defend. This is a gross violation of Americans first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression. George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous and anti-semitic, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift. I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>   |
| Rula khoury    | Community Member                             | Free Palestine  |
| Jena Musmar    | Alumni                                       | <p>The adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism is false and dangerous. As many other universities have begun adopting the definition, we've seen an increasingly hostile environment in response to criticisms of illegal occupation and apartheid. As a DC-metropolitan area school known for public policy, we know and hold true that every government is worthy of receiving criticism and upholding human rights. It is what makes a democracy. Jewishness and Judaism are distinct in their belief in social justice. As an alumna and Arab-American, I sincerely believe equating criticism of Israeli crimes against humanity with antisemitism is factually incorrect and dangerously portrays the Jewish people as those who condone genocide, apartheid, and occupation.</p> <p>I, nor should the Board of Visitors, adopt this definition for those reasons. It inaccurately protects an internationally recognized apartheid state, sacrificing GMU student voices, livelihoods, and families in doing so. The same students whom make GMU the most diverse university in Virginia.</p>  |
| Jane           | Faculty                                      | Antizionism is not antisemitism.  |
| Shirin Wertime | Sibling of alumnus and friend of many alumni | As a Northern Virginia resident, sister of a George Mason University alumnus and friend of many alumni, I urge the university to reject the inclusion of the highly problematic IHRA working definition of antisemitism in University Policy 1201. To quote the April 2023 Joint Letter sent to UN Secretary-General António Guterres by Human Rights Watch and other civil society groups "the IHRA definition has often been used to wrongly label criticism of Israel as antisemitic, and thus chill and sometimes suppress, non-violent protest, activism and speech critical of Israel and/or Zionism, including in the US and Europe." I vehemently reject this definition and its application in a public university setting.  |
| Abigail Weber  | Community Member                             | <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights, which GMU has a legal as well as moral responsibility to uphold as a public university. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression. In particular, this is troubling to me as someone who cares about the protection and support of the Jewish community on college campuses. While this policy appears at first glance to protect Jewish students, in actuality it will harm them by making antisemitic harassment more difficult to report and follow through, limit their ability to engage in community with each other and with G-d, and shut down discussion that could lead to greater understanding across diverse groups.</p> <p>Under the IHRA definition, students would be open to spurious claims of antisemitism based on their political and ideological discussion. This would have ramifications for all students, but I am particularly worried about the Jewish students this policy claims to protect. The phrasing of the IHRA definition leaves it open to being exploited with bad faith reports. This means that anti-Zionist Jews, or even Jews who are simply trying to learn and explore new perspectives outside of those their parents espoused, could face claims of antisemitism that, while obviously false, will impact their school career. Furthermore, if the office is flooded with exaggerated reports, more aggressive incidents of antisemitism may be lost in the numbers.</p> <p>This is also troubling to me as someone who cares about the protection and support of Jewish community on college campuses. The Jewish faith processes problems and grows closer to G-d: through open discussion, argument, dissent, and education. Limiting discourse on campuses, especially for Jewish issues, will ironically make it more difficult for Jewish students to safely process and develop their opinions and beliefs without fear of reprisal. While the policy aims to only penalize speech that is harmful, discriminatory, or harassing, history has shown us that such wide and permissive phrasing means that honest attempts at understanding and discussion can be read in bad faith. While I am</p> |

aware that “Zionist” has been used as a paper-thin proxy for Judaism as a whole, using such broad language opens the door for bad faith readings. These reports do not protect Jews; they shut down conversation and turn our community from one of shared growth and collaboration to a divided, dogmatic mess. Making antisemitism and anti-Zionism synonymous silences anti-Zionist Jews and shuts down discussion that is academically stimulating, community building, and, for many Jews, a sacred act of understanding and communing with G-d and others.

We know that antisemitism flourishes in the absence of truth and knowledge. The first thing the Nazis did was suppress the history of Jewish accomplishments, writings, and community through censorship. Anti-Zionism is a part of Jewish history, too. The Israel/Palestine conflict is already polarizing, with fear and grief deeply felt on both sides. Shutting down routes to empathy, mutual education, and political action will only exacerbate the existing us-vs-them framework. It is the job of universities to prepare young people to face a diverse world and tackle the challenges it presents. What are we teaching when we isolate groups from each other and block off the path to deeper understanding and empathy?

Please adopt the Jerusalem Declaration, which offers greater specificity to fight antisemitism and protect free speech.

|                  |         |   |
|------------------|---------|---|
| Dominique Hannon | Student | <p>To correlate Zionism with the Jewish identity is wrong. Zionism is a political view regarding the state of Israel and the state of Palestine. To be Jewish is a religious and cultural identity and is not nor has ever been directly intertwined with Zionism. There are Jewish people who are not Zionist, nor do they feel Zionism represents their views and values. Does this make them anti-Semitic, then? It does not. To be Israeli is a national identity, and like all national identities and their corresponding nation-states, is to be subject to criticism. We see this worldwide, every day: Americans are criticized for the involvement in continued imperialism and settlers colonialism across the world, i.e. the global US military bases. To give another example, the British face criticism from Irish Republicans regarding the continued control of Northern Ireland. In both these examples, the national identity received critique because of the relation to the nation. Israeli citizens are not exempt from critiques of their country any more than any other country in this world and on this campus.</p> <p>Choosing to adopt the entirety of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism is choosing to say that George Mason University views Zionism as intangible from Judaism, which is harmful to the Jewish population on campus whom do not share the Zionist viewpoint and political identity. Political identities can be respected, yes, but should not be shielded from critique. Just as student democratic groups on campus can choose to not engage and include student republicans and vice versa, student organizations and groups on campus also have the right to not engage with those who identify as Zionist. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Anti-Semitism is also flawed and highly opinionated regarding the correlation of criticism of Israeli State Policy with Anti-Semitism. No nation is exempt from criticism of its policies. Additionally, the right to self determination regarding the state of Israel is something that has been discussed and examined prior to the foundation of the state of Israel - just as there are Americans who believe the Indigenous population of America do not have a right to self determination on this continent, people can disagree with the Zionist viewpoint on self determination of the Israeli population.</p> <p>Anti-Semitism is a real and genuine issue for not just George Mason but universities and institutions across the world, but intertwining Zionist, Israeli, and Jewish identities is not a solution and in fact, can lead to further incidents of Anti-Semitism as those who have critiques of Zionism as a political movement and the state of Israel may believe in the Israeli propaganda of correlating Judaism with Zionism and begin to directly associate all Jewish people with Israel and Zionism.</p> <p>To reiterate: Zionism is a political viewpoint. Political view points are not free from critique. Zionism is not the same as Judaism. Nation states and national identities are not free from critique.</p> |
|------------------|---------|---|

|                |         |   |
|----------------|---------|---|
| Michael Rivera | Faculty | <p>Dear Members of the Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am writing in my capacity as a Resident Advisor at George Mason University to express my deep concerns over the proposed \$350 increase in housing costs. While I understand that adjustments to housing fees might be deemed necessary for fiscal reasons, I must highlight that this increase appears inconsistent with the recent performance issues we have encountered in on-campus housing management.</p> <p>In our daily operations, we consistently face challenges with slow maintenance responses and delays in addressing facility requests. Such delays not only affect the quality of student living conditions but also undermine confidence in the value of the services provided. It has been noted in the past that the current profit margins are considered acceptable despite these ongoing maintenance issues. In light of this, raising the cost of housing cannot be justified without a corresponding commitment to robust improvements in facilities and maintenance services.</p> <p>For the additional cost to be truly warranted, it is imperative that the university guarantees efficient responses to facility requests and a clear plan to upgrade the dorms are essential. These improvements will ensure that the increased fees are directly linked to an enhanced living environment for students. Moreover, financial aid specifically earmarked for housing should be expanded to students who struggle to meet the higher costs—especially for those out of state. I know many who struggle with paying for housing on this campus that love living on campus; these are the people that we should be ensuring that can live on campus. This assistance would help safeguard those whose academic performance and well-being might otherwise be compromised by an unmanageable financial burden.</p> <p>I respectfully urge the Board to consider these factors carefully and explore alternative solutions that balance fiscal responsibility with the undeniable need for improved service quality. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for considering the perspectives of those who are closely involved with the day-to-day challenges our students face.</p> <p>— Michael Rivera</p> |
|----------------|---------|---|

|     |                  |   |
|-----|------------------|---|
| Amy | Community Member | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a</p> |
|-----|------------------|---|



|                  |  |  |
|------------------|--|--|
|                  |  | <p>gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>As a Jewish community member, I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>  |
| Brenna Jornet    | Community Member                                   | Zionism is a political ideology that has led to the destruction and death of thousands. It's a fact. Judasim is an ancient diverse religion and conflating the two is dangerous and unfair.  |
| Community Member | Community Member                                   | <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> |
| Ariana E         | Community Member                                   | ANTIZIONISM IS NOT (!!!) ANTI SEMITISM. The deliberate attack on Jewish student is antisemitism, criticizing the current state of Israel is not!! Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians and occupying their land, if you can't see that it is clear genocide then there is something wrong with you. Again, ANTI ZIONISM IS NOT ANTI SEMETIC!!!   |
| John             |  | Anti-Zionism is not Antisemitism. DEI is not Anti-White Racism.  |
| .                |  | End Nationalism. End Racism. End Fear. End Hate.   |
| .                |  | Bring back Gunston   |
| Robert Tate      | parent of recent GMU graduate and community member | <p>Honorable Board of Visitors members:</p> <p>I write as a parent of a recent GMU graduate and a northern Virginia resident and Commonwealth taxpayer. I am also a Jewish American who is deeply distressed at policies and practices adopted at many universities across the country that are discouraging and suppressing faculty and student speech and organizational activity that is critical of Israeli government policies and practices.</p> <p>Both the IHRA definition of antisemitism--which we must all condemn and combat, along with anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim discrimination--and the resolution supporting its use by GMU have justifiably been criticized as overbroad. If adopted they predictably will chill academic freedom and legitimate and educative, as well as hateful or discriminatory, activity at Mason, inhibiting and undercutting a critical purpose of higher education.</p> <p>I urge you to protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.</p> <p>Very respectfully submitted,<br/>Robert Tate<br/>McLean</p>   |
| Benjamin Steger  | Faculty  | My comments were sent via email as they exceeded the 4,000 character limit.  |
| Mary Frazier     | Non-GMU Student                                    | I am extremely concerned about Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors which aims to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This proposal, which seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments, is an outrageous and gross violation of our first amendment rights to free speech. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.  |
|                  |  | George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their  |

very own students. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinian people. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.

I strongly urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential to higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.

Sophie Dasmalchi      Student

Dear Board of George Mason University,

I write to you this letter as a senior here at George Mason, and I hope that you will consider my statement with an open mind and relinquish any preconceived notions you may have.

It was at this very school where I learned the importance of student involvement in politics; Through a general education course I was required to take, I learned it was a student’s responsibility to engage in political activism; The Civil Rights protests of the 1960’s, the Vietnam War protests of the 70’s, Black Lives Matter in 2014, and now, the anti-genocide of Palestine movement. All these movements were met with backlash from their respective educational institutions and yet history looks upon these actions fondly as fundamental occurrences in the human rights space. The educational institutions that once suppressed these students were required to backtrack and publicize statements of change.

Last week, you circulated a civic engagement survey to gauge the level of political activism in your students. Simultaneously, you are pushing for legislature that violates the first amendment rights of these same students. I’m sure the irony of this dichotomy is not lost upon you.

I am not writing to argue that antisemitic rhetoric has a place on our campus as the discrimination or harassment of any person based on race or religion should indeed be quashed. However, I worry that antisemitism and anti-Zionism have been conflated and your proposed legislature will actively silence Palestinian voices. Let us forget the current federal investigation on George Mason University for alleged Title VI violations – National Origin Discrimination Involving Religion.

Every week, I attend class at the Sci-Tech campus. As I walk to class, I gaze up at the world’s flags pinned to the windows and banisters that line the halls- a representation of the diversity you actively boast and profit on. Yet the absence of the Palestinian flag is palpable. You cannot claim to implement these changes to remain neutral on the Israel-Palestine conflict when the Israeli flag hangs and the Palestinian flag is excluded. The erasure of Palestine pervades throughout our campus- this legislature is no exception.

I implore you to protect the first amendment rights of our students and consider amending the legislature to protect pro-Palestinian speech and allow for the political criticism of Zionism on campus.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Sophie Dasmalchi, Current GMU Student

Sara Bollag      Community Member

To whom it may concern,

I am a Jewish community member and nearby resident to GMU and I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. Myself and my local Jewish community have been organizing around the simple message that anti-zionism does NOT equal anti-semitism, and this false equivalence only works to silence the legitimate and necessary call for Palestinian rights and freedoms. The proposal at hand is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.

George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy, the real perpetrators of anti-semitism, to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to “honor freedom of thought and expression”. This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.

I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.

Thank you for your consideration.

|                 |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Emma Harris     | Student   | Institutional Neutrality seems like a half baked attempt to silence students, professors, and other academics. Right now human rights are on the chopping block and we as an institution should be well within our right to attend a university with stances on them, especially as the most diverse public school in this state. That term was coined in the 60's. We do not need to go back to the 60's. This is not the school I applied to. I applied and got into a school dedicating to serving its students and advocating for their rights, as the DOE is up in the air. This is utterly disgraceful and shameful to even consider as a policy, I do not know how this board sleeps at night knowing they are willing to sacrifice their morals and dignity to save face from potential backlash. It's pathetic. Do better. We are the future. You do not want lawmakers who hold 'neutral' stances, that is not a thing anymore. There are Nazi's. Wake up.  |
| Eva Bollag      | Community Member                                | <p>To whom it may concern:</p> <p>I am writing to express my strong disagreement with the proposed resolution regarding antisemitism on campus. While I absolutely condemn all expression of antisemitism it is widely known that the IHRA definition of it flawed (and its original author publicly stated that he never intended to be used in the way Mr. Rosen is using it here). Zionism is a political ideology - every institution which respects freedom of thought should be able to distinguish the difference between antisemitism and anti-zionism, between criticism of an ideology and hate. While I fully support not to allow expressions of hate on your campus this resolution is a veiled attempt to suppress expression of free thought. I urge you to vote "NO" on proposed resolution.</p> <p>Thank you,<br/>Eva Bollag</p>   |
| Ellie Fox       | Student   | GMU is given some discretion in how it enforces IHRA. The Antisemitism Resolution being considered is the most punitive option available, being supported by Mason Hillel and the JCRC of Greater Washington. These groups aren't interested in Jewish safety, rather, they want material support for Israel to go unchallenged. Conflating anti-Zionism and antisemitism only makes the fight against antisemitic hate harder and puts student activists at risk. The resolution should not be passed.   |
| Burton S Bollag | Community Member                                | <p>Hello,</p> <p>As a Jewish community member living near GMU, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus.</p> <p>Please understand that anti-zionism and does NOT equal anti-semitism, and this false equivalence only works to silence the legitimate support for Palestinian rights. The proposal at hand is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and promote growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize its own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-zionism is dangerous, allowing fascism and white supremacy, the real perpetrators of anti-semitism, to strengthen their roots, especially if endorsed by a University that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> |
| Tami Adejumo    | Student   | <p>Good evening. I would just like to highlight the importance of DEI to many students on campus. This program has benefited many students from different backgrounds where circumstances like financial disparities, ethnicity-linked struggles, and identity group related discrimination have been heavily prevalent. The various DEI programs that exist at George Mason University have aided me and many other students on campus in feeling more welcome and accepted on campus. Therefore, the maintenance and legislation of anti-discriminatory policy as well as programs that continue to support minorities, identity groups and students in peculiar circumstances, regardless of the name of the program would still be beneficial.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and work.</p>   |
| Mary Griffin    | Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression | A comment has been submitted via email. Thank you for your consideration.   |
| Virginia Hoy    | Faculty   | Academic freedom is fundamental to the concept of a university. The Board of Visitors' antisemitism resolution violates this valuable ideal.  |
| Tim Gibson      | Faculty   | <p>Dear BOV members,</p> <p>Please protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution!</p> <p>Rationale for a NO vote on the Visitor Rosen's Resolution on Antisemitism (from GMU-AAUP, written with the assistance of AI)</p>   |



### 1. Contradiction Between Free Speech Protections and IHRA Implementation

The resolution emphasizes the protection of First Amendment rights while also directing the University to apply the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which has been criticized for potentially limiting speech critical of Israel. The resolution states that it will use IHRA as a “tool and guide,” but also directs the University to track and report incidents based on it, raising concerns about whether speech will be policed in a way that could infringe on academic freedom and free expression.

### 2. Ambiguous Language Regarding Zionism

The resolution states: “In some cases, Zionism or Zionist has been used as a proxy for Jewish or Israeli. If used as a proxy for Jewish or Israeli, discrimination or harassment (including any of the examples listed on this factsheet of discriminatory treatment or discriminatory harassment) that targets Zionism or Zionist would also violate University Policy 1201.”

This language creates ambiguity. If a complaint is made that someone’s criticism of Zionism is antisemitic, how will the University determine whether “Zionist” was used as a proxy for “Jewish” or “Israeli”? This could lead to inconsistent application or even suppression of legitimate political speech.

### 3. Potential Conflict with Academic Freedom

The directive that the University “refrain from sponsoring or endorsing any organization, event, or other activity whose position or posture is antisemitic under the IHRA definition” could be problematic.

While the resolution states that this does not apply to faculty members, students, or independent organizations, it could still be interpreted in ways that deter legitimate academic discussions. For instance, educational programs or conferences discussing Israeli policies critically might be affected.

### 4. Inconsistencies in the Treatment of Protected Classes

The resolution specifically mandates updates to University Policy 1201 to clarify protections for “Jewish and Israeli identity,” but does not similarly mandate clarifications for other protected groups.

Including Israeli identity as a protected category is unusual, as national origin is already covered under non-discrimination policies. This might create inconsistencies in how different national identities are treated under university policy.

### 5. Selective Inclusion of Executive Orders and State Laws

The resolution references Executive Orders 13899 and 14188, as well as Virginia Chapter 471 (2023), but does not reference other anti-discrimination laws that apply to higher education institutions. This selective inclusion raises questions about whether the resolution is politically motivated rather than a neutral anti-discrimination measure.

### 6. Unclear Scope of Tracking and Reporting Antisemitic Incidents

The resolution directs the University to use the IHRA definition for “tracking and reporting antisemitic incidents in the Commonwealth.”

It is unclear what reporting mechanism will be used, whether this applies only to George Mason University, and whether the University is expected to report incidents outside its jurisdiction.

|                  |                  |   |
|------------------|------------------|---|
| Anonymous        | Student          | <p>Dear Members of the Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am writing to bring attention to ongoing issues within the College of Science, particularly within the Departments of Chemistry and Biochemistry. These concerns highlight a broader problem of disorganized leadership that directly impacts student success and accessibility.</p> <p>First, there is a lack of flexible/ADA accommodations in labs. Lab design excludes chairs, where neighboring institutions (such as the NOVA community college) do not have this issue. This creates unnecessary barriers for students with disabilities. Second, there is no clear or consistent method for students to make up missed labs. This disproportionately affects students with legitimate emergencies and accommodations. Third, I have observed grad TAs complaining about the system and how difficult these labs are set up to be. Chemistry at this institution specifically is set up to be a “weed out” course.</p> <p>Leadership and better standardization of accommodations should be focused on to address these systemic issues. Especially with the selection of a new COS dean soon, I urge the Board to push for reforms that will foster a more inclusive and well-managed learning environment for all students.</p> <p>Thank you.</p> |
| Maryann Germaine | Community Member | <p>Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.</p> <p>Ambiguous Language Regarding Zionism:<br/>The resolution states:<br/>“In some cases, Zionism or Zionist has been used as a proxy for Jewish or Israeli. If used as a proxy for Jewish or Israeli, discrimination or harassment (including any of the examples listed on this factsheet of discriminatory treatment or discriminatory harassment) that targets Zionism or Zionist would also violate University Policy 1201.”</p> <p>Zionism is a political ideology. GMU cannot mandate protecting any political ideology as part of identity. Are you planning on issuing mandatory fact sheets on Black Lives Matter, Libertarianism, or any other set of political beliefs?</p>   |

This is a dangerous attempt to expand the word's meaning, and will increase antisemitism against those of the Jewish faith.

The resolution references Executive Orders 13899 and 14188, as well as Virginia Chapter 471 (2023), but does not reference other anti-discrimination laws that apply to higher education institutions. This selective inclusion raises questions about whether the resolution is politically motivated rather than a neutral anti-discrimination measure.

The resolution attempts to balance free speech protections with the enforcement of the IHRA definition but contains contradictions that could lead to legal and practical challenges. The most significant issues include potential First Amendment conflicts, inconsistencies in how discrimination protections are applied, and ambiguity in defining and enforcing antisemitism under IHRA.

As a community member I further oppose political indoctrination of GMU students and the risk of escalated and inappropriate disciplinary actions, such as the egregious, aggressive use (and expense) of Fairfax County Police used to intimidate students under no criminal charges, instead only an accusation (unproven) of graffiti against genocide. Shame on GMU. Community members demand free speech is properly protected for all on campus.

VOTE NO.

|                    |                  |  |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Michael Zdanovich  | Faculty          | Protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.   |
| Judy Baho          | Community Member | This university should honor freedom of speech and protect students rights to protest  |
| Manal Khalid       | Student          | Many students across campus believe that the GMU administration has to restructure regulations, processes, and policies that tend to increase sentiment of biases against Palestinian students around campus and limiting free speech and cultural practices of both Palestinian and Muslim students. Many Muslim students and people of Arab/palestinian descent feel as if recent changes and policy changes by the Mason Administration has created a hostile environment for these students and groups. This population of students and humans take up most of this university yet they are still not fully heard and tend to feel isolated and excluded on this campus. |
| Julia Shadur       | Faculty          | I am writing to argue for the BOV to protect academic freedom and free speech at Mason. Vote NO on the BOV antisemitism resolution.  |
| Andrey Arcidiacono | Student          | Written comment emailed to bov@gmu.edu   |

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

WHEREAS, George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin (including shared ancestry and/or ethnic characteristics), sex, disability, military status (including veteran status), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, pregnancy status, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law;

WHEREAS, the university is and must remain committed to adhering to State and federal law, including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Chapter 471 of the 2023 Virginia Acts of Assembly, and will adhere to U.S. Presidential Executive Orders 13899 and 14188;

WHEREAS, the university is also committed to protecting the First Amendment rights of students, employees, and visitors, and will address any Prohibited Discrimination (defined in University Policy 1201), including Prohibited Discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics and National Origin without diminishing or infringing any right protected under the U.S. Constitution, including the First Amendment, laws of the United States, and laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia;

WHEREAS, the university revised University Policy Number 1201 ("Non-Discrimination Policy") on August 27, 2024, to include reference to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of antisemitism and contemporary examples of antisemitism consistent with the United States Constitution and the Constitution of Virginia;

WHEREAS, University Policy Number 1201 requires the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI)<sup>1</sup> to utilize the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of antisemitism<sup>2</sup> and contemporary examples of antisemitism to the extent that they might be useful as evidence of discriminatory intent;

WHEREAS, the university uses the IHRA definition as a tool and guide for training, education, recognizing, and combating antisemitic hate crimes or discrimination and for tracking and reporting antisemitic incidents in the Commonwealth;

WHEREAS this board recognizes that the ODEI considers usages of terms that could be used as a proxy for a protected characteristic(s) in considering discriminatory intent. This includes usage of terms such as "Zionism" or "Zionist" as a proxy for shared Jewish ancestry or Israeli National Origin. If these terms are used as a proxy for "Jewish," "Israeli," or the similar, analysis of discriminatory intent is used in the same manner that is stated within University Policy 1201, consistent with the IHRA definition and contemporary examples.

---

<sup>1</sup> If ODEI's name changes at any time, the successor office shall automatically comply with the contents of this Resolution without amendment by this Board of Visitors.

<sup>2</sup> ODEI shall use the IHRA Definition adopted May 26, 2016, unless relevant federal or state law mandates an update.



WHEREAS, the university has clarified and specified that both Jewish (shared ancestry) and Israeli identity (National Origin) are Protected Characteristics under University Policy Number 1201;

WHEREAS, the university updated the Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Statement to reference the IHRA definition;

WHEREAS, the university updated the ODEI "Equal Opportunity Report Form" to list Presidential Executive Orders 13899 and 14188, and Chapter 471 of the 2023 Virginia Acts of Assembly under "Related Laws and Policies;"

WHEREAS, the university updated the ODEI "Equal Opportunity Report Form" and the ODEI and University Life "Bias Incident Report Form" to include "shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics" and "Actual or Perceived Ethnicity/Ancestry;"

WHEREAS, this board and the university are committed to the principles of academic freedom and the expression of individual viewpoints, while ensuring that individuals and groups are not harassed, intimidated, discriminated against, or threatened, in violation of State and federal law;

WHEREAS, the purpose of this Resolution is to ensure that measures being taken by this Board and the university are consistent with applicable State and federal law while also ensuring that the university is addressing a marked increase in antisemitism across the United States and the world;

WHEREAS, the University has already taken steps that, according to the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington and Mason Hillel, "exemplify strong leadership and demonstrate much-needed commitment and compassion for Jewish members of their community"; and the University endeavors to continue that example;

WHEREAS, George Mason is participating in the sixth cohort of Hillel International's Campus Climate Initiative in an effort to assess the climate for Jewish students and develop a campus-specific action plan to enhance Jewish students' sense of belonging; AND

WHEREAS, George Mason is in its second year as a member of the Academic Engagement Network whose goal is to envision a world where American higher education welcomes, respects, and supports the expression of Jewish identity and robust discourse about Israel.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. RESOLVED, this board directs that the university publish a factsheet on Shared Jewish Ancestry/Israeli National Origin discrimination, including the IHRA definition and contemporary examples. The method of promulgation will be consistent with the universities' other non-discrimination policies and that method will be reported to the Board.
2. RESOLVED, this board directs the university to ensure all Mason employees (defined as anyone who receives a paycheck from Mason) receive guidance on IHRA during required in-person or online Equal Opportunity trainings through the ODEI; and that applicants for

admission to the university be provided with access to University Policy 1201 during the application process; AND

3. RESOLVED, this board directs that the University, and each of its colleges, schools, departments, and official academic units refrain from officially sponsoring or formally endorsing in advance any event, activity, or outside organization whose planned or announced position is antisemitic. This directive applies solely to institutional endorsement or sponsorship in advance by the University and its academic units, and shall *not* (a) restrict the individual speech or academic freedom of faculty members, students, or student or faculty organizations on campus, (b) prevent students or faculty from gaining access to university facilities for events, activities, or organizations because of the constitutionally protected viewpoint or position taken by such individuals or student or faculty organizations; nor (c) impact the University's decision to recognize a student organization because of the constitutionally protected viewpoint or position taken by such organization. Nothing anywhere in this resolution shall be interpreted to infringe on rights protected by the United States or Virginia Constitutions, including but not limited to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution or Article I, Section 12 of the Virginia Constitution; AND
4. RESOLVED, this board declares that the University seeks to prevent unlawful antisemitic discrimination or violence in *any of its forms and manifestations*, and will have no tolerance for Prohibited Discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived Jewish shared ancestry or Israeli National Origin. Prohibited Discrimination that violates university policy shall result in meaningful consequences following established disciplinary processes for students, faculty or staff. The President of the university shall provide this board with a report of all findings of violations of Policy 1201 at the end of each academic year, and as otherwise requested by the board.

Adopted: 2-27-25

  
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'C. Stimson', is written over a horizontal line.

Charles Stimson  
Rector  
Board of Visitors  
George Mason University