



STATE OF FLORIDA

**ASHLEY MOODY
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

August 26, 2024

Manny Diaz, Jr.
Commissioner of Education
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1514
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Raymond Rodrigues
Chancellor
State University System of Florida
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1614
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Florida college and university presidents and other higher education officials:

This week marks the beginning of another school year for the State of Florida's forty colleges and universities. As students return to campus, I write to follow up on the memorandum I sent you last year and to advise you of recent legal developments, including a federal court decision, regarding our continued obligation to protect our Jewish students from harassment, intimidation, and other incidents of antisemitism.

In the days and months following the horrific October 7 attacks on Israel, America saw university administrators across the country utterly fail to protect Jewish students and maintain law and order. Many schools allowed encampments and demonstrations to disrupt student life and school operations.¹ Some of these schools even tolerated overt acts of antisemitic harassment and violence.² And because school administrators allowed this unconscionable conduct to continue throughout the entire school year, some universities were forced to cancel graduation ceremonies.³

Not in Florida. Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, Florida opposed the radical takeover of American universities and offered an example to the rest of the country. We stood by our Jewish

¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/antisemitic-incidents-us-jumped-360-oct-7-hamas-attack-advocacy-group-rcna133104> (Anti-Defamation League reported a 360% increase in antisemitic incidents after Oct. 7).

² <https://nypost.com/2023/10/26/metro/jewish-students-reveal-what-happened-at-cooper-union-protest/>.

³ <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestine-war-campus-protests-usc-cff0c1e59fc6164f615a2686d7f1b401>.

students and ensured that Florida's campuses remained institutions of education instead of cesspools of lawlessness and hate.

As you may recall, my office circulated a memo last year advising you of certain protections and requirements under Florida law. I have attached that memo as a reminder of the zero-tolerance policy for antisemitism in the State of Florida. Please take the time to refresh your awareness of the relevant provisions of Florida law and consult appropriate authorities when faced with circumstances that might implicate these laws.

As an update to that memo, I also want to advise you that failing to protect Jewish students would create significant legal risk for Florida colleges and universities. For example, a federal court in California recently entered an injunction against UCLA after the court found that "Jewish students were excluded from portions of the UCLA campus because they refused to denounce their faith," a fact the court called "unimaginable" and "abhorrent to our constitutional guarantee of religious freedom."⁴ Such failures may also put federal funding at risk.

As we begin this new school year, let us renew our commitment to making Florida the best State in the nation for education and the safest State for Jewish students. Thank you for your service to our State and your commitment to fighting discrimination.

Sincerely,



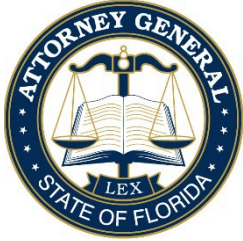
Ashley Moody
Florida Attorney General

CC:

Governor Ron DeSantis
Dr. Donald Astrab, Broward College
Dr. Sarah Clemmons, Chipola College
Dr. James D. Henningsen, College of Central Florida
Dr. Jonathan Gueverra, College of the Florida Keys
Dr. Tom LoBasso, Daytona State College
Dr. James Richey, Eastern Florida State College
Timothy L. Beard, Ph.D., Florida A&M University
Dr. Stacy Volnick, Florida Atlantic University
Dr. Lawrence Barrett, Florida Gateway College
Dr. Aysegul Timur, Florida Gulf Coast University
Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell, Florida International University
Dr. Devin Stephenson, Florida Polytechnic University
Dr. Jeffrey Allbritten, Florida SouthWestern State College

⁴ <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cacd.928715/gov.uscourts.cacd.928715.89.0.pdf>

Dr. John Avendano, Florida State College at Jacksonville
Richard McCullough, Ph.D., Florida State University
Glen McDonald, Gulf Coast State College
Dr. Kenneth Atwater, Hillsborough Community College
Dr. Timothy Moore, Indian River State College
Dr. Heather Bigard, Lake-Sumter State College
Madeline Pumariega, Miami Dade College
Richard Corcoran, New College of Florida
John Grosskopf, North Florida College
Dr. Cristie Kedroski, Northwest Florida State College
Ava Parker, J.D., Palm Beach State College
Dr. Jessie Pisors, Pasco-Hernando State College
Dr. Charles E. Meadows, Pensacola State College
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Dr. Paul Broadie II, Santa Fe College
Dr. Georgia Lorenz, Seminole State College of Florida
Fred Hawkins, South Florida State College
Joe Pickens, St. Johns River State College
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Tommy Gregory, State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota
Dr. Jim Murdaugh, Tallahassee State College
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Kent Fuchs, University of Florida
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MEMORANDUM

TO: All Florida Colleges and Universities and All Florida College and University
Campus Police Chiefs

FROM: Attorney General Ashley Moody

DATE: October 17, 2023

SUBJECT: Protecting Jewish College Students and Faculty

Last week, Hamas terrorists attacked the nation of Israel, killing thousands of men, women, and children. These acts of violent aggression are sickening and have no place in civil and organized society. We continue to pray for the people of Israel, as well as their friends and family across the world and in Florida who fear for the safety of their loved ones.

In the aftermath of Hamas's terrorist attacks, our office has heard reports that tensions have spilled over onto our college campuses. Jewish students report feeling threatened as a result of antisemitism on campus. Specific incidents reported in just the last week include a Jewish student at Columbia University who was beaten with a stick in front of the school library after hanging flyers with the names and pictures of Israeli hostages captured by Hamas, and a Jewish student at Drexel University who was the victim of arson of his dorm room.

Please be reminded that the State of Florida has a zero-tolerance policy for hate crimes, including those based on religious and ethnic heritage, and this extends to our college campuses. Florida stands with Israel and those affected by Hamas's horrific crimes, and we cannot stand by and let those who wish to terrorize, harass, assault, or threaten our Jewish communities do so with impunity. All Campus Police Chiefs and college officials are encouraged to remain vigilant to ensure the safety of our students and faculty. In furtherance of this, please take the time to refresh your familiarity with §1000.05, Florida Statutes, §775.085, Florida Statutes, § 784.0493, Florida Statutes, § 806.13, Florida Statutes, and § 810.098, Florida Statutes.

Section 1000.05 includes religion as a protected class with regard to discrimination against students and employees in Florida's K-20 public education system. The bill requires a public K-

20 educational institution to treat discrimination by students or employees or resulting from institutional policies motivated by anti-Semitism as discrimination motivated by race.

Section 775.085 increases the felony or misdemeanor degree of an offense if the commission of the offense shows prejudice based on the race, color, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, homeless status, or advanced age of the victim. Section 775.085 also creates a civil remedy for persons or organizations who are the victims of hate crimes.

Sections 784.0493, 806.13, and 810.098 were signed into law by Governor DeSantis on May 1, 2023. These laws prohibit the willful and malicious harassing or intimidating of another person based on the person's wearing or displaying an indicia relating to religious or ethnic heritage and provide further protections for persons on a state university or Florida College System institution. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement has provided detailed guidance on these laws through a memo that is available via secure link on CJNET.

The State of Florida will not tolerate violence against our Jewish student and faculty population, or any other person in the State based on their religious or ethnic heritage. Any campus law enforcement officer considering charging a suspect under the statutes discussed above should consult his/her legal advisor, his/her state attorney, or the Office of Statewide Prosecution and make expedited arrests when appropriate. Thank you for your service to our state and our students.