

May 1, 2024

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins Senate Majority Leader New York State Capitol, Rm. 330 Albany, NY 12247 Senator Toby Ann Stavisky Chair, Higher Education Committee Legislative Office Building, Room 913 Albany, NY 12247

Senator James Skoufis Chair, Investigations & Government Operations Committee Legislative Office Building, Room 815 Albany, NY 12247

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Senator Stavisky and Senator Skoufis:

As you know, there has been a rise in antisemitism across our state following the horrifying attacks on October 7th. We have seen and continue to see Jewish New Yorkers targeted by violent protestors, including those on our college campuses.

Most recently, two weeks ago, pro-Hamas protests started at Columbia University. Despite the un-American behavior against Jewish students and the fact that Hamas is a listed terrorist organization as identified by the United States Department of State, the University's Administration has taken little to no action

Instead, the President of the University, Minouche Shafik, issued a statement in which she stated she hopes "everyone can take a deep breath, show compassion, and work together to rebuild the ties that bind us together." She then announced that students should stay home for the rest of the semester with classes to be held virtually. She has since stated that educators and student organizers have been unable to reach an agreement to end these protests. It is unacceptable that educators and administrators are negotiating with terrorist sympathizers.

As protests at Columbia University were occurring, Ms. Shafik was testifying in front of Congress to address questions of antisemitism and how the University has responded to conflicts on the campus regarding the Israel-Hamas war. In her testimony, she claimed that she is committed to doing everything she can on her campus to confront this issue directly. Despite her recent statements, up until this point and in the midst of the current chaos on the campus, Ms. Shafik and her Administration continue to take few to no active steps on putting an end to this ongoing situation.

For this reason, pursuant to Senate Rule VII, Section 2, we respectfully ask that you call Ms. Shafik to present before a joint Higher Education and Investigations and Government Operations committee meeting. We need clear definitive answers on what Ms. Shakif is doing to diffuse this situation and ensure the safety of Columbia University's students.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Ortt Senate Minority Leader

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