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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

March 26, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Ms. Laura Rosenbury
President
Barnard College
3009 Broadway
New York, NY 10027

Dear President Rosenbury:

In February, dozens of Columbia students “took over a building at Barnard College for several hours,” resulting in an assault on a school employee.¹ According to reports, the students were protesting the expulsion of students who “stormed a Columbia University class in January and threw around flyers loaded with hateful [anti-Israel] rhetoric.” Columbia’s chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) posted on X about the incident, stating, in part, “WE WILL NOT STOP UNTIL OUR DEMANDS ARE MET.”²

In a March 3, 2025, article, you wrote that the incident at Barnard resulted in \$30,000 in damages and that individuals who were involved “forcibly and illegitimately entered the building, damaged or destroyed property, disregarded...community expectations, and violated many policies and rules.”³ You connected the incident and others at Columbia to “an unauthorized group of anonymous individuals calling themselves Columbia University Apartheid Divest” (CUAD).⁴ You described this group as operating “in the shadows, hiding behind masks and Instagram posts with Molotov cocktails aimed at Barnard buildings, antisemitic tropes about wealth, influence, and ‘Zionist billionaires’ and calls for violence and disruption at any cost.”⁵

¹ Chris Nesi, Shane Galvin, and Valentina Jaramillo, *Pro-Hamas protesters seize control of historic Barnard academic building and assault college employee*, NEW YORK POST (Feb. 26, 2025), <https://nypost.com/2025/02/26/us-news/dozens-of-pro-hamas-students-seize-control-of-historic-barnard-college-academic-building/>.

² X Post, SJP at Columbia (Feb. 26, 2025), <https://x.com/ColumbiaSJP/status/1894857746056663155>.

³ Laura Ann Rosenbury, *When Student Protest Goes Too Far*, THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (Mar. 19, 2025), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/when-student-protest-goes-too-far>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

SJP, which Columbia suspended on November 10, 2023, after it “repeatedly violated University policies related to holding campus events,” appears to be a leading member of CUAD.⁶ A November 14, 2023, article published by CUAD in the Columbia Spectator expressed a number of demands, including one that SJP be reinstated.⁷ It was co-signed by 94 organizations, and SJP was first on the list.

According to reports, SJP was supported by another group, American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), which has personnel with reported ties to the Foreign Terrorist Organization Hamas.⁸ AMP leaders have engaged with college students during anti-Israel campus demonstrations, and AMP Executive Director Osama Abuirshaid addressed students at Columbia University. Dr. Abuirshaid previously worked as editor of a newspaper for an organization that was founded with startup money from Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzook.⁹ In addition, he “has . . . published interviews that highlight his communications with Hamas leader Abu Marzook and other Hamas leaders in Gaza . . . [and] in 2014 . . . was featured on the website of Hamas’s self-declared military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades.”¹⁰

Activity that threatens the safety of others is not constitutionally protected free speech, and conduct that violates campus rules should not be tolerated. Reports of individuals with ties to terrorist groups or their affiliates engaging with students on college campuses are also cause for the highest alarm.

Through its Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism, the Trump Administration is taking critical steps to address “anti-Semitic harassment in schools and on college campuses.”¹¹ In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has announced that sixty colleges and universities “are presently under investigation for Title VI violations relating to antisemitic harassment and discrimination.”²⁹ The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) is also investigating the activities of Hamas-linked groups on college campuses to determine what, if any, additional legislative action may be required to protect students.

⁶ Sarah Huddleston and Chris Mendell, *Columbia suspends SJP and JVP following ‘unauthorized’ Thursday walkout*, COLUMBIA SPECTATOR (Nov. 11, 2023), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2023/11/10/columbia-suspends-sjp-and-jvp-following-unauthorized-thursday-walkout/>; Columbia University Apartheid Divest, *Columbia University Apartheid Divest: Who we are*, COLUMBIA SPECTATOR (Nov. 14, 2023), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/opinion/2023/11/14/columbia-university-apartheid-divest-who-we-are/>.

⁷ Columbia University Apartheid Divest, *Columbia University Apartheid Divest: Who we are*, COLUMBIA SPECTATOR (Nov. 14, 2023), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/opinion/2023/11/14/columbia-university-apartheid-divest-who-we-are/>.

⁸ *The sources of the pro-Palestinian demonstrations*, FOX NEWS (May 11, 2024), <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6352755454112>; *Who’s really behind Students for Justice in Palestine*, FOX NEWS (Apr. 23, 2024), <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6351492889112>; *From Ivory Towers to Dark Corners: Investigating the Nexus Between Antisemitism, Tax-Exempt Universities, and Terror Financing, Hearing before the House Ways and Means Committee*, 118th Congress (2023) (statement of Dr. Jonathan Schanzer), <https://gop-waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Schanzer-Testimony.pdf>.

⁹ *From Ivory Towers to Dark Corners: Investigating the Nexus Between Antisemitism, Tax-Exempt Universities, and Terror Financing, Hearing before the House Ways and Means Committee*, 118th Congress (2023) (statement of Dr. Jonathan Schanzer), <https://gop-waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Schanzer-Testimony.pdf> at 9.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Press Release, Justice Department Announces Formation of Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism (Feb. 3, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-formation-task-force-combat-anti-semitism>

In order for HELP to investigate these matters further to ensure campus safety, please respond to the following, on a question-by-question basis, no later than April 9, 2025.

1. Please provide a detailed account of incidents on Barnard's campus involving SJP and CUAD. Your response should include all violations of campus policy, threats to campus safety, and antisemitic threats directed at Barnard students.
2. Please summarize the steps Barnard has taken to investigate the incidents on its campus involving expressions of antisemitism, and all related findings.
3. Please provide all records in Barnard's possession related to SJP and CUAD and their on-campus activities.
4. Is Barnard aware of any organizing activity by AMP or its affiliates on its campus? Please provide all related records.
5. Is Barnard aware of the connection between SJP, AMP, and the Foreign Terrorist Organization Hamas? Please explain and provide all related records.
6. Did SJP ever receive funding from Barnard College? If so, how much, and what was the source of the funding?
7. Did SJP ever have a faculty representative affiliated with Barnard? If so, was a faculty member assigned to this role or did one volunteer to serve as SJP's representative? Please provide all relevant information.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions