



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo, Murray and Oberacker call on governor to withhold state funding from Columbia University

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 26, 2024

| ISSUE: **ANTISEMITISM;**

Following pro-Hamas protests at Columbia University, New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome, Sen. Dean Murray, R-C-East Patchogue, and Sen. Peter Oberacker, R-C-Schenevus, are urging the governor to withhold state funding from the New York City school and to support efforts to remove its tax-exempt status.

In a letter to the governor, Sen. Griffo, who is the ranking member of the Senate's Higher Education Committee and a member of the New York State Senate Republican Conference Antisemitism Working Group, Sen. Murray, who is a member of the Higher Education Committee, and Sen. Oberacker, who is a member of the Higher Education Committee and New York State Senate Republican Conference Antisemitism Working Group, wrote that the "university's handling of this situation is disappointing, concerning and, frankly, disgusting."

"Students, faculty and staff should feel safe when on campus," **Sen. Griffo said.** "They should not have to live in fear because of their religion. If New York State is serious about stopping antisemitism, then they should take action to address this issue and prove to New Yorkers that antisemitic and hateful acts will not be tolerated."

"The fact that there are students and faculty on the campus of Columbia University that sincerely fear for their safety and well-being, is an absolute disgrace," **Sen. Murray said.** "The most basic duty of any institution of higher learning is to ensure that every student can safely pursue a higher education, regardless of their race, gender, religion, etc. ... and Columbia University has failed

miserably in fulfilling this duty.”

“College campuses should be safe havens for students and faculty, yet that is not the case at Columbia University,” **Sen. Oberacker said.** “Rather than taking steps to protect Jewish individuals, the university is forcing students to go home and take classes from a dorm room – it is unthinkable that this is their solution. Those who are committing these antisemitic acts need to be punished and the backward logic being implemented at Columbia University needs to be reversed immediately.”

**The full text of the letter is below:**

April 26, 2024

Gov. Kathy Hochul  
Executive Chamber  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Gov. Hochul:

As members of the Senate’s Higher Education Committee, we are writing regarding the pro-Hamas protest taking place at Columbia University in New York City.

The university’s handling of this situation is disappointing, concerning and, frankly, disgusting. Instead of creating a safe environment where students can learn and grow, the response by the university’s administration has created an atmosphere of fear, antisemitism and chaos and has jeopardized the safety of students, faculty and staff – especially those of the Jewish faith. Moving to remote learning for the remainder of the school year is a disservice to those who attend the university.

Given the administration’s poor response to this protest, we are urging you to withhold any state funds that are disbursed to Columbia University and to support our efforts to pass a Constitutional

Amendment to allow the Legislature to remove their tax-exempt status. Action must be taken to show that antisemitism will not be tolerated in New York.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph A. Griffo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

Joseph A. Griffo

New York State Senator, 53rd Senate District

Dean Murray

New York State Senator, 3rd Senate District

Peter Oberacker

New York State Senator, 51st Senate District

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