

**Testimony to the Pennsylvania Senate Education Committee
Submitted for the Record by University of Pennsylvania
Vice President for Government and Community Affairs Jeffrey Cooper**

July 25, 2024

Chairman Argall, Chairwoman Williams, and members of the Pennsylvania Senate Education Committee. Thank you for offering the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) the opportunity to submit the following written testimony for the record. We share the Committee's interest in combatting antisemitism at institutions of higher education, and we continue to work aggressively and intentionally to eradicate this and all other pernicious forms of hate from our campus.

Penn has consistently and unequivocally condemned antisemitism. All acts of hate are anathema to the most fundamental ideals of our University. Our past condemnation messages are archived on Penn's Supporting Our Community website, which is accessible at supporting-our-community.upenn.edu. The University's Interim President, Dr. Larry Jameson, clearly conveyed Penn's position when, as Executive Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania Health System and Dean of the Perelman School of Medicine, he wrote:

“Calls for genocide, echoing horrors of the past, violate our behavioral standards and remind us that we must forcefully condemn, prevent, and respond to hate in all forms. ... Harassment, bias, intimidation, and discrimination will not be tolerated. Hateful actions based on race, religion, identity, or nationality must be rooted out and eliminated on our campuses.”

To fight the scourge of antisemitism, Penn has taken swift action to respond to and address antisemitic acts in line with University policies. Anchored in the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, Penn is committed to a University-wide approach that combats antisemitism. Penn has implemented a comprehensive Action Plan to Combat Antisemitism built upon three priority areas for action, including ensuring the safety of every member of our community; engaging deeply with all community members; and ensuring everyone at Penn is educated and knowledgeable about antisemitism. Penn has taken several steps already in accordance with the action plan's three-pronged approach:

1. The well-being of Penn's campus begins with the University's Division of Public Safety, which includes an authorized strength of 120 sworn police officers who are certified through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission. These officers perform more than 1,000 special checks of high-risk locations per week and have at times performed more than 2,000 per week during periods of heightened concern. To supplement the Penn Police Department's work, Allied Universal Security officers have provided thousands more additional safety checks since September 22, 2023, and provided nearly 42,300 additional staff hours of coverage since October 9, 2023. The University also has provided enhanced or additional security at 17 centers for campus and religious life at

- Penn, including Hillel, the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, and traditionally Jewish fraternity and sorority houses.
2. Penn has contracted with T&M USA, a leading firm that specializes in security assessments of religious spaces, to review Penn's campus. T&M has developed, conducted, and delivered hundreds of assessments, security design projects, and training workshops for synagogues, churches, temples, schools, yeshivas and many other nonprofit and religious institutions.
 3. This Spring, Penn reconstituted for the remainder of the 2023-24 academic year a Special Event Review Group to make thoughtful decisions about requests to schedule special events on campus. The Special Event Review Group was particularly attuned to several key categories, including events that pose significant public safety or security challenges and/or have the potential to attract a large audience.
 4. Penn, its schools, and its centers have launched programs to educate our community on issues of hate and how to bridge differences in a civil manner. The School of Arts and Sciences launched "Living the Hard Promise," a series of small-group conversations, symposia, and other programs that engage our community on contemporary challenges of upholding free speech while ensuring civility and mutual respect. The Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies offered a six-event speaker series last semester, entitled "Jews and the University: Antisemitism, Admissions, Academic Freedom." The series is one of several programs the Katz Center is leading under a new five-year initiative focused on studying Israel and antisemitism through a grant from the Goldhirsh-Yellin Foundation. Additionally, the Jewish Studies Program at Penn hosted a scholarly symposium in April on the history, meanings, and responses to antisemitism in the past and present.
 5. Our leadership is engaging directly with students to understand their individual perspectives and issues of concern. We constituted two separate student advisory groups—one devoted to the Jewish student experience and a similar group for the Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian student experience—that meet monthly with the President and Provost. These meetings will continue through at least the end of 2024.

Beyond our campus, Penn has engaged broadly and meaningfully with prominent local and national organizations that share our goal of providing a safe environment for members of our community. Interim President Jameson and other senior leaders have met with and regularly speak with Dr. Andrew Goretzky, director of the Philadelphia regional Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and with the ADL's CEO and National Director, Jonathan Greenblatt. We have met with leaders of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, including Michael Balaban, President and CEO, and Jason Holtzman, Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council. We have engaged with the American Jewish Committee, as well as the Shoah Foundation, the latter of which we continue to meet with to benefit from their expertise and longstanding partnership. Further, we have maintained regular contact with Hank Butler, executive director of the Pennsylvania Jewish Coalition, who has been immensely helpful. We appreciate his leadership, his counsel, and his endorsement of the final report and recommendations made by our University Task Force on Antisemitism.

In May, Interim President Jameson released final reports of the [Task Force](#) and the separate [Presidential Commission on Countering Hate and Building Community](#). Both reports are the

result of months of extensive outreach and thoughtful work. Each group included faculty scholars, students, staff, and alumni, as well as former and current trustees. Together, these groups conducted dozens of listening sessions, reviewed hundreds of emails, consulted experts within and outside of Penn, and produced online surveys generating hundreds of responses.

The thoughtful recommendations contained within these reports offer concrete guidance for actions Penn can and will take, as well as aspirational goals that will inform institutional priorities in the future. The complementary reports reaffirm Penn's values and clarify University policies and reporting, while also offering distinct ideas for building community, investing in research and scholarship, and supporting the student experience.

Given the focus of today's hearing, this testimony presents 10 recommendations articulated by Penn's Task Force on Antisemitism. These recommendations, outlined below, are designed to be actionable, with implementation of many already underway.

University Task Force on Antisemitism recommendations

1. **Define and assert Penn's values.** The most successful long-term solution to combatting antisemitism at Penn relies on cultivating a culture of shared values that emphatically rejects antisemitism and all forms of hate. The Task Force recommended that Penn clearly articulate, assert and communicate its core institutional values.
2. **Commit to leading in Jewish studies and education.** Education and scholarship are at the core of Penn's identity and mission. The Task Force recommended that the University strengthen faculty expertise and expand learning opportunities for students, including mandatory academic experiences during a student's first year and/or during undergraduate and graduate orientations that incorporate antisemitism into a broader primer on inclusion and unconscious bias.
3. **Enhance existing programmatic structures to promote cross-cultural understanding.** By strengthening effective existing campus-wide initiatives, such as Campaign for Community, Conversations with Community, Dinners Across Differences, and Projects for Progress, Penn can strengthen its culture of community responsibility, civil discourse, and respect for all members.
4. **Promote a healthy environment that supports Jewish student life on campus.** To further uphold its history as a welcoming place for Jewish students and families, the Task Force recommended the University invest in a multi-faceted approach that focuses on institutional support, admissions, religious needs, safety and security to strengthen the Jewish experience at Penn.
5. **Encourage and embrace global collaboration.** Free and open academic inquiry is a signature value at Penn and crucial to countering divides in scholarship driven by global economic and political pressures. Better communication across borders will enhance knowledge of not only antisemitism, but also other disciplines (e.g. history,

politics, religion, economics) that may contribute to antisemitism's rise elsewhere in the world.

6. **Amplify research collaboration and resources in social media literacy.** The proliferation of online misinformation and hate speech has become a potent force fueling the propagation of antisemitism. With its notable scholars and formidable strengths in transformative research, Penn is well positioned to lead this endeavor globally, integrating education and research on the nexus of disinformation, digital media, and artificial intelligence.
7. **Clarify guidelines on open expression.** Penn must ensure that its policies align with and uphold the University's institutional motto of *Leges sine moribus vanae* (Laws without morals are useless). The Task Force issued a rapid response recommendation to Dr. Jameson in February that the University review existing policies governing on-campus expression and conduct to ensure consistency, clarity, transparency, and alignment with Penn's values—especially to incidents of antisemitism.

To that end, in June, the University instituted new temporary standards and procedures for campus events and demonstrations. This recommendation mirrored earlier calls from the Penn community for clarifications and updates to the University's time, place and manner policies. The purpose of these temporary standards and procedures is to reinforce and reaffirm Penn's commitment to open expression and, at the same time, ensure that events, demonstrations, and other expressions of free speech are appropriately managed. Such clarity is crucial to ensuring Penn's ability to deliver on its core missions of teaching, research, service, and patient care without disruption.

At the same time in June, Dr. Jameson announced a new task force charged with reviewing the Guidelines on Open Expression and recommending revisions. These guidelines have not been reviewed since 1989. While Penn remains steadfast in its commitment to freedom of thought, inquiry, speech, and lawful assembly, the present moment calls on us to revisit these guidelines to ensure they are supporting these foundational commitments. The work of this Task Force is underway. The group's ultimate recommendations will be put forth for consideration by the Committee on Open Expression, the University Council, and ultimately Interim President Jameson.

8. **Enhance and promote cross-cultural understanding.** By integrating antisemitism awareness into required inclusive training programs, Penn aims to heighten awareness and identification of antisemitism as an issue on equal footing with other forms of discrimination and bias. This training may also help improve campus-wide familiarity of reporting mechanisms for bias and the adjudication process.
9. **Enhance incident reporting and transparency.** Following a separate rapid response recommendation to Dr. Jameson in December, Penn's Center for Community Standards and Accountability published in April 2024 a [dashboard](#) that included violations of the student codes of conduct, sanctions, and open cases. During the

Spring 2024 semester, for example, 161 cases of student conduct and two group cases were referred to the Center. Among sanctions imposed during this time, 40 violations resulted in probation, 22 violations resulted in suspension of six students, and three violations resulted in degrees being withheld or delayed.

The University believes transparent and accessible reporting is vital to fostering a culture of accountability and awareness. The new dashboard provides this insight and streamlines access to information, centralizing data from various incident reporting mechanisms and clearly communicating the many reporting channels available.

10. **Assess campus climate.** Recognizing that regular assessment of Penn's campus climate is crucial to achieving the goals set forth in this report, the Task Force recommended integrating specific questions about Jewish community members' experiences into existing campus surveys in the short term to be followed by more a more consistent long-term plan to gather comprehensive feedback and track trends over time.

Antisemitism, though centuries old, has clearly experienced a resurgence, both prior to and since the October 7, 2023, terror attack on Israel. Those events have had a profound impact on the Jewish community—at Penn and at countless other institutions of higher education.

At this moment of national and international division, Penn will continue to do what it has done for nearly three hundred years: create knowledge, share it for good, and educate the next generation. The University has been guided by the goal that every person should feel safe and be secure in the knowledge that hate has no home on our campus.

For too long, our community has been under threat and our campus disrupted. While we acknowledge the positions and views of people on all sides of these issues, passion for a cause cannot supersede the safety of our students, faculty and staff; the operations of our University; or the pursuit of our academic mission.

During the nearly two-week encampment on our campus last semester, University leaders met with protestors on multiple occasions for extended periods of time. We hoped that reasonable conversations could address their concerns and the University's needs. We made clear that their proposals were not possible, including their demands that participating students and faculty receive amnesty without proceeding through our due process for conduct and for divestment from entities engaged with Israel. Penn remains unequivocally opposed to boycotts, divestment, and sanctions targeted against Israel. We also recognize that divestment focused on Israel is unlawful for institutions receiving funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Chairman Argall, Chairwoman Williams and members of the Committee, we appreciate your efforts to raise the profile of antisemitism as a persistent and pernicious form of hate. We have condemned antisemitism consistently and will continue to do so. We join with you in seeking to restore a sense of safety and belonging on college campuses—including at Penn—for our Jewish community by cultivating a culture that welcomes, supports, retains, and engages students, faculty, staff and alumni while helping them thrive. This important work remains ongoing and

unfinished. We remain focused on leading in this moment and building a stronger University in the months and years ahead. We welcome your partnership in that pursuit.