



## Cornell University

Martha E. Pollack  
*President*

November 7, 2023

The Honorable Wesley Hunt  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative Hunt:

Thank you for your November 1 letter expressing your concern, both as an alumnus and a congressman, regarding reports of antisemitism and the targeting of Jewish students at Cornell. I was horrified by the horrendous, antisemitic messages posted online a week ago Sunday. As I noted in my [message](#) to campus last week, we are undertaking a number of additional steps to elevate our attention to antisemitism, its causes and strategies to intervene, and to bring in fresh eyes to advise us on additional steps we can take to counter antisemitism and all forms of hatred on our campus. We plan on detailing the outcomes of those efforts broadly.

The safety and security of the entire Cornell community continues to be our top priority. Cornell Police take threats very seriously and we continue to have an enhanced law enforcement presence on campus to keep our community safe. We have increased patrols and arranged additional security for our Jewish students and organizations on and off campus, and the university is in constant communication with these groups. Students, faculty, or staff have been advised to contact the Public Safety Communications Center at [607-255-1111](tel:607-255-1111) or through the RAVE Guardian app if they are being harassed or threatened, or to report suspicious activity. Anyone with information about threats made against members of our community is asked to come forward. Anonymous reports can be made through the [Silent Witness Program](#). Moreover, Cornell has clearly defined policies and processes for any member of our campus community or individual visitors to our campus to file complaints related to prohibited conduct and for those complaints to be reviewed and addressed.

With regard to Professor Rickford, I also share your outrage and [spoke out](#) strongly and publicly against his reprehensible comment, noting that it demonstrated a complete disregard for humanity. Professor Rickford requested and received a leave of absence for the duration of the academic year. Like most universities and consistent with well-established principles of academic freedom, Cornell has a process for considering whether personal opinions such as those expressed off

campus by Professor Rickford demonstrate an unfitness to serve. All members of our academic community are entitled to due process.

In closing, I will note that I have met several times over the last week with our Jewish students who live at the Center for Jewish Learning. I have been heartened by these students who have expressed strength and resilience even in the face of these awful threats.

Thank you again for writing, for your attention to this critical issue, and for all that you do for your constituents and our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martha E. Pollack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Martha E. Pollack