

Good afternoon members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am a Jewish student at the University of Maryland. I speak today for the unfavorable position of the bill. The bill would require campuses to involve police assets in response to “anonymous complaints” submitted about student protesters, forgoing alternative de-escalation measures that have been effective in the past like faculty liaisons. This would put Black and brown students in danger who are already at a greater risk of facing police brutality.

Furthermore, the “time, place, and manner” restrictions of this bill can easily be weaponized by school administrations. On my campus, university policy changes around where we are allowed to chalk has resulted in a terrible crackdown on a form of student expression. Student organizations who aren’t even political struggle to chalk messages about their events due to the new restrictions.

Meanwhile, in the state of Ohio, a bill nearly identical to this one was passed. If we consider ourselves to be a progressive state that takes the lead on social justice, then we should consider what modeling legislation off of Ohio does to that image. One of the great things about higher education is that it exposes students to other perspectives. There are some perspectives that may make some people uncomfortable, even deeply uncomfortable. Yet forcing ourselves to talk these things out, however uncomfortable, is every bit as much about maturing as it is about free speech. Let us find ways to meaningfully support dialogue instead of stifling it. For these reasons, I urge you to vote for the unfavorable position on the bill.