



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, REGION IV

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ATLANTA, GA 30303-8927

REGION IV
ALABAMA
FLORIDA
GEORGIA
TENNESSEE

March 4, 2020

Stuart Roth, Esq.
Mark Goldfeder, Esq.
Benjamin Sisney, Esq.
American Center for Law and Justice

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Re: OCR Complaint #04-20-2122

Dear Mr. Roth, Mr. Goldfeder, and Mr. Sisney:

On January 9, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (Department), Office for Civil Rights (OCR), received your above-referenced complaint (Complaint) filed on behalf of your clients, Hillels of Georgia and Lauren Blazofsky, a faculty member and the Director of Hillel at Georgia Tech (Hillel Director), against Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), alleging discrimination on the basis of national origin (ancestry). The Complaint alleges that Georgia Tech failed to appropriately respond to complaints of discrimination on the basis of Jewish ancestry filed by the Hillel Director and two Georgia Tech students arising from a public event titled "Palestine 101" sponsored by a student organization at Georgia Tech on April 1, 2019 (Event).

Specifically, the Complaint alleges that the Georgia Tech student organization sponsoring the Event, the Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA), denied the Hillel Director entry to the Event because she is Jewish and affiliated with Hillel at Georgia Tech, a Jewish organization on Georgia Tech's campus. The Complaint alleges that the Hillel Director subsequently filed a complaint with Georgia Tech's Office of Student Integrity regarding her exclusion. The Complaint also alleges that, after a student conduct hearing on September 17, 2019, Georgia Tech determined that YDSA had violated the Hillel Director's rights, but that Georgia Tech later reversed this decision. In addition, the Complaint alleges that two Jewish students who attended the Event filed separate complaints with Georgia Tech's Office of Student Integrity alleging harassment at the Event. The Complaint alleges that Georgia Tech has not addressed these student complaints.

OCR is responsible for enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, and its implementing regulation, 34 C.F.R. Part 100. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin by recipients of Federal financial assistance from the Department. As a recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Department, Georgia Tech is subject to the provisions of Title VI. Accordingly, OCR has jurisdiction over this complaint.

Additional information about the laws OCR enforces is available on our website at <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>.

Because OCR has determined that it has jurisdiction and the Complaint was timely filed, OCR is opening for investigation the following legal issue:

Whether Georgia Tech failed to appropriately respond to complaints of discrimination on the basis of Jewish ancestry arising from an event sponsored by a student organization at Georgia Tech, in violation of Title VI and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. § 100.3.

Please note that opening this allegation for investigation in no way implies that OCR has made a determination with regard to its merits. During the investigation, OCR is a neutral fact-finder, collecting and analyzing relevant evidence from the complainant, the recipient, and other sources, as appropriate. OCR processes complaints in accordance with OCR's *Case Processing Manual*¹.

Please be advised that Georgia Tech must not harass, coerce, intimidate, discriminate, or otherwise retaliate against an individual because that individual asserts a right or privilege under a law enforced by OCR or files a complaint, testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding under a law enforced by OCR. If this happens, the individual may file a retaliation complaint with OCR.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release this document and related correspondence and records upon request. If OCR receives such a request, we will seek to protect personally identifiable information that could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy if released, to the extent provided by law.

We will communicate with you periodically regarding the status of the Complaint. Please refer to the docket number listed above in any contacts with this office regarding the Complaint.

OCR works to resolve allegations of discrimination promptly and appropriately. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact Vahn Wagner, Senior Attorney, at (404) 974-9392 or me at (404) 974-9356.

Sincerely,



Wendy Gatlin
Compliance Team Leader

¹ See <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocrcpm.html>.