

George Mason University
James Madison University
Longwood University
University of Mary Washington
Virginia Tech University

**COALITION OF STUDENT
BODY PRESIDENTS**
from Virginia Public Universities

Virginia Commonwealth University
University of Virginia
Norfolk State University
Christopher Newport University
College of William & Mary

October 22, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin:

We, the elected student representatives of 10 Virginia Public Universities representing over 180,000 students, urgently write to address recent concerns regarding the longevity of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs at our public institutions. Recent politically driven changes to offices and programs that offer academic support, community-building opportunities, safe spaces for mental health discussions, trusted mentors, and professional development have left many students fearful for the future of the services they rely on for both their education and personal growth. The absence of these support systems will only make college more difficult for many students.

Regardless of individual discomfort or political ideology, the facts are clear: these programs have been instrumental in creating safe campus environments and driving academic success, empowering countless students across public institutions in the Commonwealth.

This letter is a united, nonpartisan invitation for our elected leaders to learn from the experiences and expertise of those with diverse political ideologies and backgrounds to inform their actions on behalf of the populations they serve. By instituting these practices, we can refocus our attention on what truly matters: prioritizing students' interests.

We must foster an environment of constructive critique and open dialogue to promote progress and build a world where we can work together. Without it, prejudice takes hold, dividing us into opposing factions and hindering our collective efforts to support students' well-being and academic success in the Commonwealth.

Given that your decisions regarding higher education directly impact students at all of our Universities, we stress the importance of upholding our nation's founding principles, which are too often lost in today's partisan and hyper-politicized reality: the principles of democracy and the right of citizens to voice their concerns and be afforded an audience to do so.

We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss student experiences at the universities we represent to ensure that student voices are actively heard and centered in the decisions shaping our education and future.

Sincerely,



Maria A. Romero Cuesta
Student Body President
George Mason University



Valentina Mendoza Gonzalez
Student Body President
University of Virginia



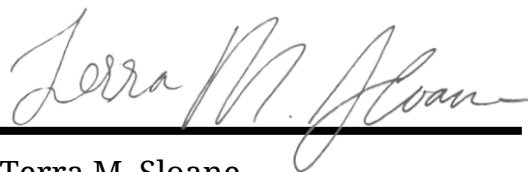
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William Thompson
Student Body President
University of Mary Washington



Neil Miller
Student Body President
Longwood University



Mary Mckenzie Hurley
Student Body President
Christopher Newport University

CC:

Don Scott, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates

Scott Surovell, Majority Leader of the Virginia Senate

Winsome Earle-Sears, Lieutenant Governor of Virginia

Aimee Guidera, Virginia Secretary of Education

Martin D. Brown, Chief Diversity Officer, Commonwealth of Virginia