

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1230

TITLE: A Resolution Reaffirming Turlington Plaza as a Place for Protected Free Speech

AUTHOR(S): Senator Isha Khan, Senator Hunter Monson

SPONSOR(S): Senator Raj Mia, Senator Elizabeth Insuasti

WHEREAS, Turlington Plaza, previously one of two designated areas for free speech at the University of Florida, is home to demonstrations of social activism, political promotions, & fundraisers or events from various organizations &/or groups [1][2]; and,

WHEREAS, Turlington Plaza is one of the most frequented areas on the University of Florida campus; thus, the right to protected speech is fundamental as individuals of all races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, ages, etc. navigate through the area on a daily basis; and,

WHEREAS, on February 8, 2023, a pro-Palestinian silent protestor was attacked & assaulted within Turlington Plaza, violating that protestor's protected right to protest within the area [3][4]; and,

WHEREAS, on October 9, 2023, the "United with Israel" candlelight vigil at Turlington Plaza resulted in a mass panic due to the sounds of presumed gunshots, leading to numerous attendees needing medical treatment [5][6]; and,

WHEREAS, on February 2, 2023, University of Florida students supporting the "Chomp Hate" campaign were met with antisemitic protestors in Plaza of the Americas, the other previously designated area for free speech at the University of Florida [7][8]; and,

WHEREAS, also on February 2, 2023, a suspicious package, initially presumed to be a bomb & later confirmed to be research material, was found in Turlington Hall that resulted in the immediate evacuation of the area by University of Florida Police Department (UFPD) [7][9]; and,

WHEREAS, on October 25, 2023, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) wrote a letter to University of Florida President Ben Sasse outlining that "by insupportably alleging that communications about campus protests from the national organization to its campus chapters constitutes material support for Hamas' terrorist activity overseas, this order unlawfully threatens students' clear expressive and associational rights under the First Amendment" [15][16][17]; and,

WHEREAS, in regard to *Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Florida v. Rodrigues*, the ACLU stated “students and faculty at public colleges and universities have a First Amendment right to express themselves, which includes the freedom to voice dissent against government policies, and to advocate for the movements and causes they believe in” [18]; and,

WHEREAS, while SJP has succeeded in gaining protection, there is no guarantee that similar attacks geared towards other organizations will not occur in the future; therefore, the possibility of such poses an imminent threat to the First Amendment rights for students at the University of Florida [18]; and,

WHEREAS, the ACLU stated that “in times of heightened political tension and global crisis, it is crucial for university leaders to safeguard free speech, open debate, and peaceful dissent on campus,” demonstrating that protected speech’s affirmation is of the utmost importance [18]; and,

WHEREAS, in times of such stratification, having an open dialogue allows students & staff to better understand the perspectives of others & each individual’s core beliefs; and,

WHEREAS, at the University of Michigan, student email listservs where students were discussing the international crisis were restricted or shut down, posters expressing support for Palestinians were removed, and aggressive policing and punitive discipline to a campus protest and sit-in also occurred, prompting the ACLU to send a letter to University of Michigan President Santa J. Ono & Vice President & General Counsel Timothy Lynch regarding the suppression of students’ speech [19][20]; and,

WHEREAS, attacks similar to what occurred on February 8, 2024, undermine the aforementioned constitutional principle that free speech is not only a guaranteed right, but is of the utmost priority to preserve this right within higher learning institutions like those of the University of Florida; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that the protection of students’ speech on campus is included under their First Amendment rights; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate advocates for continued open dialogue regarding sociopolitical issues of all forms between students, faculty, staff, & administration; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate supports the voices of students in their pursuits of social equity & activism; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate, in accordance with First Amendment principles and the State of Florida’s *Campus Free Expression Act*, reaffirms the right to protected free speech within Turlington Plaza & any other traditional public forum, barring any disruption of functioning, disorderly conduct, & obstruction of any other person’s rights to engage in their own expressive activities.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be emailed to University of Florida Police Department, University of Florida President Ben Sasse, University of Florida Student Body President Olivia Green, Vice President for Student Life Heather White, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Board of Trustees Chair Mori Hosseini, Director of Campus Engagement & Interim Assistant Vice President for Student Life James Tyger, Interim Director of the Center for Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement Elle Collins, Program Director of Asian Pacific Islander Desi Student Engagement Flora Wang, Program Director of Black Student Engagement Satcha Sanon, Program Director of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Student Engagement Jamir Wright, Program Director of Hispanic-Latinx Student Engagement Nathalie Turenne, University of Florida Students for Justice in Palestine, Lubavitch Chabad Jewish Student & Community Center at the University of Florida, University of Florida Hillel, ACLU of Florida Board, University of Florida Islam on Campus, University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences College Faculty Council Chair Brent Henderson, Members of the University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences College Faculty Council, University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences College Assembly Chair Melissa Mellon, Members of the University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences College Assembly, the State University System of Florida Board of Governors Chair Brian Lamb, the State University System of Florida Board of Governors Vice-Chair Alan Levine, the State University System of Florida Board of Governors Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz, Jr., the State University System of Florida Board of Governors Members Ashley Bell Barnett, Timothy M. Cerio, Aubrey Edge, Patricia Frost, Edward Haddock, Jack Hitchcock, Ken Jones, Darlene Luccio Jordan, Charles H. Lydecker, Craig Mateer, Jose Oliva, Amanda J. Phalin, & Eric Silagy, University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Faculty Senators Luiss Alvarez-Castro, Angela Bacsik, Andrea Caloiaro, Konstantina Christodouloupoulou, Madeleine Coy, James Garner, Crystal Marull, Matt Smith, Gene Witmer, Imre Bartos, James Essegbey, Ifigeneia Giannadaki, Selman Hershfield, Flora Iff-Noel, Valeria Kleiman, Esther Romeyn, Imanol Suarez-Palma, Anastasia Ulanowicz, Stefanie Wulff, Alex York, Ben Smith, Hannah Vander Zanden, Eleni Bozia, Eleonora Rossi, & Ying Xiao, University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Associate Deans Bianca Evans-Donaldson, Margaret Fields, Brian Harpe, Chris McCarty, Trysh Travis, & Mary Watt, University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Interim Associate Dean Kevin Ingersent, University of Florida College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Associate Dean for Student Affairs Gillian Lord, University of Florida College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean David E. Richardson.

- [1] [April - Freedom of Expression Statement - Statements - University of Florida](#)
- [2] https://www.alligator.org/article/2022/07/turlington?ct=content_open&cv=cbox_latest
- [3] <https://www.instagram.com/p/C3lSk1zRIY0/>
- [4] <https://www.alligator.org/article/2024/02/turlington-sign-protest>
- [5] <https://police.ufl.edu/2023/10/09/turlington-plaza-incident-10-9-2023/>
- [6] <https://www.wuft.org/education/2023-11-14/heres-a-full-timeline-of-the-chaos-at-the-turlington-plaza-vigil-for-israel>
- [7] <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/local/2023/02/02/antisemitic-ye-supporters-show-up-to-uf-campus-where-jewish-group-is/69868167007/>
- [8] <https://wheresthefreedomofspeech.alligator.org/>
- [9] <https://npr.brightspotcdn.com/ab/5c/924ceb58475dbd9eb783c9cf1489/bog-letter-to-sus-schools.pdf>

- [10] <https://www.wuof.org/florida-news/2023-10-30/free-speech-advocates-are-concerned-with-floridas-attempt-to-silence-pro-palestine-student-group>
- [11] <https://dw-wp-production.imgix.net/2023/10/DAY-OF-RESISTANCE-TOOLKIT.pdf>
- [12] *STUDENTS FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA v. RAYMOND RODRIGUES*
- [13] <https://www.aclu.org/cases/students-for-justice-in-palestine-at-the-university-of-florida-v-raymond-rodrigues>
- [14] <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/federal-court-rules-florida-officials-do-not-intend-to-deactivate-university-of-floridas-students-for-justice-in-palestine>
- [15] <https://npr.brightspotcdn.com/e8/b7/db97e97c4275a7e4eeff571591ef/fire-letter-to-university-of-florida-october-25-2023.pdf>
- [16] <https://www.thefire.org/>
- [17] [https://www.aclu.org/news/free-speech/defending-free-speech-students-justice-palestine-florida#:~:text=Recent%20actions%20by%20Florida%20officials,in%20Palestine%20\(SJP\)%20chapters.](https://www.aclu.org/news/free-speech/defending-free-speech-students-justice-palestine-florida#:~:text=Recent%20actions%20by%20Florida%20officials,in%20Palestine%20(SJP)%20chapters.)
- [18] <https://www.aclumich.org/en/press-releases/aclu-sends-letter-signaling-concern-over-university-michigans-stifling-student-speech>
- [19] https://www.aclumich.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/2023.12.19letter-to-university-of-michigan.pdf



3/21/24

Monish Vijayaraghavan
Senate President

Date