

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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Jessica L. Bagby
Head of School
Ethical Culture Fieldston School
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Nigel D. Furlonge
Principal, Fieldston Upper
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3901 Fieldston Road
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Dear Ms. Bagby and Mr. Furlonge:

We write to express our strong concern with numerous reports about anti-Semitic remarks at Ethical Culture Fieldston School (ECFS).¹ As members of the House Bipartisan Task Force for Combating Anti-Semitism, and as cosponsors of the *Never Again Education Act* (H.R. 943/S. 2085), we are dedicated to combatting anti-Semitism in classrooms and on campuses in our home states of New York and New Jersey.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise in the United States, the tri-state area, and across New York's Five Boroughs. According to the NYPD, anti-Semitic incidents are the most common hate crimes, having increased 53% this year alone. This December, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recorded more than a dozen incidents in which Jews were threatened, harassed, or physically assaulted in New York and New Jersey. The ADL's Annual Audits have also found a huge spike in incidents in K-12 schools over the past few years, including 344 incidents at K-12 non-Jewish schools in 2018.

We are therefore concerned that Ethical Culture Fieldston School recently hosted a speaker who reportedly said: "That Jews who suffered in the Holocaust and established the State of Israel today—they perpetuate violence against Palestinians that [is] unthinkable." By drawing comparisons between the Holocaust and the State of Israel, these statements misrepresent current events while devaluing the horrors of the attempt to eliminate European Jewry. We must object to such abhorrent ideas being excused or becoming normalized. The widely-accepted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism identifies as one of the Contemporary Examples of Anti-Semitism, "Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis."²

¹ "Pride and Prejudice at Fieldston: An elite New York private school, founded by Jews, is rocked by allegations of systemic anti-Semitism," *Tablet*, December 18, 2019. <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/295595/pride-and-prejudice-at-fieldston>. See also: "Accusations and Rancor as Elite School's Leader Departs," *The New York Times*, July 12, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/12/nyregion/ethical-culture-fieldston-school-principal.html>

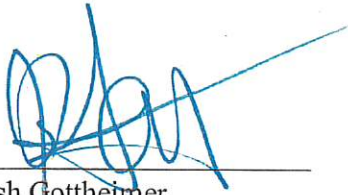
² "Contemporary Examples of Antisemitism," *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)*, May 26, 2016. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf

Furthermore, violent anti-Semitic groups have singled out and targeted Jewish communities in our districts as “Zionists,” and have routinely sought to deny the historic fact of the Holocaust. A failure to act against these forms of speech legitimizes and encourages violence against Jews just as other forms of hate speech have inspired attacks against other minority communities in recent years.

There should be no place in our national discourse for hate-filled speech targeted at any group. As Jewish Members of Congress dedicated to combatting anti-Semitism, we would like to understand how such a speaker could be invited to address ECFS students, what steps the school has taken to hold those responsible accountable, how the school has communicated to students and parents that such rhetoric is unacceptable, and how ECFS will implement processes to prevent future incidents. We also encourage you to work with groups like the Anti-Defamation League to pursue dedicated programming to better educate students, faculty, and administrators about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism in order to remedy the situation.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Josh Gottheimer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Max Rose
MEMBER OF CONGRESS