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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESPONSIVENESS
AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO OVERSIGHT
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

February 18, 2025

Hon. G. Paul Nardo, Clerk of the House
Hon. Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Senate
Virginia State Capitol
1000 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Nardo and Mrs. Schaar,

I write to you today to share reports I received regarding conduct of a member of the General Assembly related to the Virginia Military Institute and the employment contract of its Superintendent. The reports I received are deeply troubling and, if accurate, each body of the General Assembly should impanel their respective Standards of Conduct subcommittees to further review these actions.

As Congressman for Virginia's Sixth Congressional District, I am proud to represent the Virginia Military Institute. This storied institution produces outstanding young men and women prepared to serve our nation in many capacities and it is the responsibility of all those who serve Virginia to support and strengthen it. The Institute is also a significant economic driver in this region and many of my constituents earn their livelihoods from the Institute.

Within the last few weeks, members of the General Assembly have attempted to pressure the Board of Visitors to extend the employment contract of VMI's superintendent, General Cedric Wins. These members have suggested they would take official acts as legislators if the General did not receive a lengthy contract extension. These actions, specifically the direct threats made by Senator Jennifer Carroll-Foy, are unbecoming, inappropriate, and ethically questionable.

Senator Carroll-Foy recently spoke to a Board member claiming that certain members of the leadership of the General Assembly had "placed in peril" funding for VMI, and that it could only be rectified if General Wins received a four year contract extension. According to the Board Member, Senator Carroll-Foy said the following:

"I am just trying to help VMI. Cedric is African American. The leadership of the General Assembly is African American. Your board appointments and budget amendments are in peril. You can fix this by giving Cedric a four year contract extension."

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These race-related comments, wholly unbecoming of a member of the General Assembly and completely inconsistent with the values of our nation, make plain the leadership of the General Assembly is attempting to exert undue influence on the decisions of the Board in exchange for funding priorities of VMI.

Contract decisions are the prerogative of the Board of Visitors for each institution, as set out by the Constitution and state law. Attempting to coerce Board members under the threat of taking official acts on state funding is inappropriate and ethically questionable, at best. In my sixteen years of service in the General Assembly, I never witnessed any legislator threaten to take official acts if a Board of Visitors did not accede to their demands related to the contract of a university president.

I respectfully request you forward this letter to the appropriate panels of the House and Senate for additional review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Cline". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ben Cline
Member of Congress