

STATE CAPITOL  
P.O. BOX 942849  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0017  
(916) 319-2017  
FAX (916) 319-2117

E-MAIL  
Assemblymember.Haney@assembly.ca.gov



DISTRICT OFFICE  
455 GOLDEN GATE AVENUE, ROOM 14300  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102  
(415) 557-3013  
FAX (415) 557-3015

April 10, 2025

**UC President Michael V. Drake**  
Office of the President  
University of California  
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

**Office of General Counsel**  
The California State University,  
Office of the Chancellor  
401 Golden Shore  
Long Beach, California 90802-4210

**RE: Urgent Call to Protect Academic Freedom and Safeguard Students, Faculty and Staff from Federal Overreach**

Dear UC President Michael V. Drake and the CSU Office of the General Counsel,

We are a coalition of members of the California State Legislature, united in urging UC and CSU campuses across the state to take urgent and all necessary steps to protect students, faculty and staff from being targeted by the federal government for free speech activities. This letter is prompted by two recent Executive Orders from the Trump Administration—Executive Order 14161 and Executive Order 14188—which have instilled fear and disproportionately targeted international students for exercising their free speech rights as students. These orders directly conflict with the core principles of academic freedom and could compel public universities to violate the First Amendment, which guarantees free speech rights for all students, faculty, and staff, including non-U.S. citizens.

As lawmakers committed to upholding the fundamental rights that define our democracy, we call on you to vigorously defend the First Amendment on your campuses. Free expression, particularly within academic environments, is essential to the pursuit of truth and the free exchange of diverse ideas. We expect that every member of your campus community—whether student or faculty—be able to engage in open discourse without fear of censorship or retaliation, ensuring an environment where debate, intellectual growth, and mutual respect can thrive.

California universities and colleges have long been leaders in promoting free speech and creating environments conducive to promoting the sharing of diverse thoughts and point of views. We urge you to remain by those values and resist any voluntary or administrative requests for the names or information relating to students or faculty related to ongoing federal Title VI investigations, without a subpoena, court order or otherwise required by law. We ask that you adopt formal policies stating that our universities will not voluntarily share information about student, faculty and staff political activities, immigration status, or participation in protests with federal authorities unless legally compelled.

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And we ask you to take immediate steps to protect the privacy of students, faculty and staff and their free speech activities on campus, including but not limited to any courses they've enrolled in, student organizations they are a part of, or political activities they may have participated in, unless required by law. We request that staff, faculty, and campus police receive regular training on responding to immigration enforcement actions and upholding the privacy rights and safety of all students.

The recent revocation of student visas and deportations, such as those at UC San Diego and Santa Cruz, highlight the dangers of targeting individuals based on vague or politically motivated requests. As of April 7th, 2025, over 30 students across CSUs system wide had their student visas revoked, including universities such as Sacramento State and San Diego State. This raises serious concerns about the safety and academic stability of international students, underscoring the need for campuses to protect their communities from unjust federal overreach. Protecting your campus community from unnecessary federal overreach is critical to ensuring the safety and academic freedom of all students and faculty. Engaging in peaceful protest or political expression — including criticism of U.S. or foreign governments — is protected and should not result in academic or immigration-related penalties.

California's colleges and universities have a vital responsibility to encourage robust discussion and the exploration of ideas among students, faculty, and staff, irrespective of their nationality or immigration status. Our institutions should not be strong armed by the federal government to act as deputies for immigration law enforcement, as doing so would divert them from their core mission of fostering education and intellectual growth. California's public universities must protect the privacy of all students, including immigrant and international students, faculty and staff, ensuring that their personal information is not compromised. In doing so, schools must adhere to the principles set forth in the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, safeguarding the rights and dignity of every member of their community.

We would respectfully appreciate a response to this letter and clarification on what steps are being taken to protect the fundamental rights of all students, faculty and staff in California.

Sincerely,

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Matt Haney  
Assemblymember, District 17

Mike Fong  
Assemblymember, District 49

Catherine Stefani  
Assemblymember, District 19

Mark González  
Assemblymember, District 54

Ash Kalra  
Assemblymember, District 25

Chris Ward  
Assemblymember, District 78

Robert Garcia  
Assemblymember, District 50

Dr. Corey Jackson  
Assemblymember, District 60

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Ahrens".

Patrick Ahrens  
Assemblymember, District 26

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sade Elhawary".

Sade Elhawary  
Assemblymember, District 57

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tina McKinnor".

Tina McKinnor  
Assemblymember, District 61

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Lee".

Alex Lee  
Assemblymember, District 24

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Celeste Rodriguez".

Celeste Rodriguez  
Assemblymember, District 43

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "José Luis Solache, Jr.".

José Luis Solache, Jr.  
Assemblymember, District 62

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pilar Schiavo".

Pilar Schiavo  
Assemblymember, District 40

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Caloza".

Jessica Caloza  
Assemblymember, District 52

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*Steve Bennett*

Steve Bennett  
Assemblymember, District 38

*John Harabedian*

John Harabedian  
Assemblymember, District 41

*Liz Ortega*

Liz Ortega  
Assemblymember, District 20

*Chris Ward*

Chris Ward  
Assemblymember, District 78

*Darshana Patel*

Darshana Patel  
Assemblymember, District 76

*Isaac G. Bryan*

Isaac G. Bryan  
Assemblymember, District 55

*Scott Wiener*

Scott Wiener  
Senator, District 11