



ADAM LEHMAN

President and CEO

President Thomas LeBlanc
George Washington University
1918 F Street NW
Washington, DC 20052

May 15, 2020

Dear President LeBlanc,

Hillel International and GW Hillel are greatly appreciative of your administration's partnership and support in working to foster a welcoming climate for the Jewish student community on campus, as part of the broader GW community. In the spirit of that partnership, I am writing to express concern about the interim appointment of Prof. Ilana Feldman as dean of the Elliott School of International Affairs. As a vocal opponent of Israel and supporter of the boycott, divestment and sanction movement against the world's only Jewish state, Dr. Feldman's views run counter to your own stated views and those of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish GW community members. Her appointment is likely to empower further opposition to Israel on campus, both in academic forums and student activities, and contribute to an environment in which Jewish and pro-Israel students feel increasingly unsafe and unwelcome in Foggy Bottom.

Dr. Feldman was part of a small group that led a campaign for the American Anthropological Association to boycott Israeli academic institutions, and is currently one of the managers of that campaign. She has publicly accused Israel of the "wholesale slaughter of a civilian population" for its 2014 defensive actions against the Hamas terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip. These false and reckless accusations should not be part of academic discourse modeled by the senior leadership of the Elliott School.

My colleagues and I have enormous respect for academic freedom and the freedom of speech for all on a university campus. However, we also know that the role of dean carries with it the responsibility to advocate and implement the core values and policies of the Elliott School and the University, which we understand to include open academic engagement across international boundaries, welcoming diverse viewpoints with respect and civility, and staunch opposition to academic boycotts. Unfortunately, Dr. Feldman's appointment as interim dean will be seen by many as compromising these values and policies and potentially understood as your administration's support for Prof. Feldman's spearheading boycotts of Israeli institutions of higher education. It will likely also have a chilling effect on faculty and students who wish to engage in scholarly



activity in Israel and freely express and act on their support for Israel. Given several recent examples in which Jewish and pro-Israel students have been targeted on campus, we believe this appointment will send the wrong message about the university's commitment to a free exchange of ideas in a civil and respectful manner.

We would respectfully ask that you and your administrative colleagues do everything possible to assure Jewish and pro-Israel students that their values and perspectives are welcome on campus, including through the expedited appointment of a permanent dean. The professionals and student leaders at GW Hillel, as well as my Hillel International colleagues, stand ready to do whatever we can to partner with you in order to improve the climate on campus and to ensure that diverse perspectives and views on Middle East issues are heard and welcomed in academic and extracurricular forums.

Thanks for your consideration of these concerns. And I look forward to connecting, either in person or by video, in the near future.

Best,

Adam Lehman

Cc: M. Brian Blake, Provost and Exec. Vice President for Academic Affairs