

To the Duke University School of Law Community:

Our law school's mission is to advance knowledge and the rule of law. We write in our individual capacities to reaffirm that mission and—alongside our colleagues at numerous other law schools—to speak out against recent government actions that threaten these core principles.

We bring a diversity of perspectives and experiences to our shared academic enterprise. Though we ourselves have differing views on many matters, we share a commitment to the lawful expression of ideas, including ones with which we disagree. Those expressions are protected by the Constitution, are critical to academic pursuit, and are now under threat. The Administration has pursued executive actions targeting universities, their faculties, and their students in ways that undermine academic independence and the free exchange of ideas. If allowed to continue, those actions will damage our intellectual communities and the country's ability to advance knowledge.

In saying this, we in no way discount the gravity of concerns about antisemitism and other forms of bias, which must be taken seriously. Higher education institutions must reflect and engage in actions to ensure that we do better to offer a diversity of perspectives and further our standing as trusted beacons for knowledge and truth. Given the long, successful partnership America's research universities have had with the federal government, we owe it to our country to look for ways to move forward, and for solutions that protect our fierce independence as institutions of higher education while improving who we are and what we offer.

We further share a commitment to the rule of law and to the role of lawyers and judges in preserving that rule of law. As the American Bar Association states in the preamble to its Model Rules of Professional Conduct, “[a]n independent legal profession is an important force in preserving government under law, for abuse of legal authority is more readily challenged by a profession whose members are not dependent on government for the right to practice.”

Yet government actions targeting individual lawyers and law firms have no basis in law and are contrary to the protections of our Constitution. Requiring lawyers to acquiesce to improper demands or face such punishment places them in a position inconsistent with the essential role of lawyers as officers of the courts and independent advocates for their clients. Similarly, government threats to impeach judges based on disagreements with their judicial decisions, from whatever political quarter those threats come, are inconsistent with the fundamental principles underlying judicial independence—principles that have been respected by political actors for over 200 years. An independent judiciary is essential to the preservation of the rule of law and our most basic constitutional rights.

In closing, we stand together and with members of other law schools to speak out in support of the foundational principles we hold dear—academic freedom and the rule of law.

Sincerely [in alphabetical order],

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**All signatories are members of the Duke School of Law Governing Faculty (active or emeritus).*