



STATE OF NEW YORK
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
ALBANY 12224

KATHY HOCHUL
GOVERNOR

April 29, 2024

Dear New York College and University Presidents:

Over the past two weeks I have spoken with many of you about public safety on campus and the urgent need to ensure all students are protected from violence, discrimination and harassment.

Under New York's Human Rights Law, it is "an unlawful discriminatory practice for an educational institution to permit harassment of any student by reason of race, religion, national origin," or other protected characteristics. All institutions must act to aggressively guard against antisemitism and all forms of hateful or discriminatory rhetoric, on and off campus, as well as to uphold the solemn right to demonstrate in support of one's beliefs.

As you know, we are at a critical time in the academic calendar as many institutions finish classes and celebrate commencement. Already we have seen schools outside of New York State announce plans to cancel commencement ceremonies due to concerns related to disturbances or protests.

Let me be clear: all students have a right to finish their studies, take exams, and in the case of seniors, graduate with the ceremonies and recognition they and their families deserve. Students and families who have worked hard and invested much for years should not be denied that opportunity as the result of the actions of others.

That is why extensive security preparations, including identification of appropriate event sites, must be considered now. It is my expectation that every college and university in New York will celebrate commencement safely in person. To that end, my Administration's public safety and operations teams are available to you to help advise on planning and best practices as you work to ensure in-person commencements can safely move forward.

Please do not hesitate to follow up with my office to discuss this or other efforts to keep students on all of our campuses safe and free from harassment and discrimination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kathy Hochul' in a cursive script.

Kathy Hochul
Governor