

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2024

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of Washington, D.C.
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW #406
Washington, D.C. 20004

Ms. Pamela A. Smith
Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia
300 Indiana Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mayor Bowser and Chief Smith,

We are alarmed by reports that the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia (MPD) rejected requests from officials at the George Washington University (GWU) to assist in removing the radical, antisemitic, and unlawful protestors who have encamped on the university's campus and surrounding District of Columbia public land for several days. It is deeply disturbing that while GWU has attempted to take concrete measures to protect the safety of its Jewish student body from persecution and harassment, it is hindered by the MPD's refusal to provide assistance clearing out the encampment, over fears of public criticism.¹

The Mission Statement of the MPD is "to safeguard the District of Columbia and protect its residents and visitors with the highest regard for the sanctity of human life... with a focus on service, integrity, and fairness by upholding our city's motto *Justitia Omnibus -- Justice for All.*"² It is difficult to see how MPD is following its own mission statement when GWU, a respected institution in Washington, D.C., has stated that the recent actions of protestors represent "...an egregious violation of community trust and goes far beyond the boundaries of free expression and the right to protest."³

The aforementioned statement from GWU comes after hundreds of protestors—including professional organizers with no relation to the university—forcibly breached barricades to gain entry into the encampment.⁴ Further, after repeatedly breaking down the barricades which were reset by the GWU police, the protestors took the barricades, threw them into a pile and began celebrating.⁵ GWU has consistently attempted to act in good faith for the wellbeing of its student population but has faced obstruction from the MPD and the Office of the Mayor. Without

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/04/26/dc-police-george-washington-university-protests/>

² <https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/mpdc-mission-and-value-statement>

³ <https://mediarelations.gwu.edu/update-demonstration-gws-foggy-bottom-campus-630am>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://gwhatchet.com/2024/04/29/hundreds-of-protesters-overrun-barricades-blocking-off-pro-palestinian-encampment/>

assistance from the MPD, GWU is unable to clear the encampment and restore order because it lacks the manpower and jurisdiction to act on public land. The inaction of the MPD and the District of Columbia is out of sync with police departments and local governments nationwide which have responded to similar requests for help from universities to clear out unlawful encampments in states such as Missouri,⁶ Massachusetts,⁷ and others.

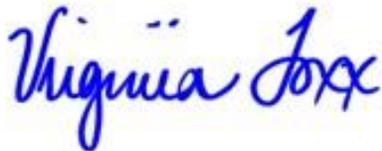
As you know, the Constitution grants Congress plenary legislative authority over the District of Columbia in all cases. If the District of Columbia and MPD refuse to exercise their authority to assist GWU in securing the safety of its students and faculty, Congress will be obliged to exercise its legislative powers to do so.

To assist our understanding of the issue and our ability to provide oversight, please provide answers to the following questions no later than May 9, 2024:

1. Why has the Office of Mayor Bowser and MPD refused GWU's calls for assistance in clearing out the encampment of unlawful protesters on and adjacent to the campus?
2. What conditions must be met before MPD will act to assist GWU in clearing out the encampment of unlawful protesters?
3. How is MPD's refusal to assist GWU in clearing out the unlawful and antisemitic protest encampment in keeping with MPD's own mission statement?

This is a pivotal moment for Washington, D.C.'s leaders. We call on you to answer fully for the reluctance to enforce the law. In the event you do not, Congress will take the necessary actions to ensure this failure will not be repeated.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce



James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

⁶ https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/education/protest-of-gaza-war-at-st-louis-washington-university-ends-with-arrests/article_546b79ce-04da-11ef-aa5b-b7d719f4ba9d.html

⁷ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tylerroush/2024/04/27/around-100-arrested-at-northeastern-university-pro-palestinian-encampment-in-latest-campus-crackdown/?sh=5d09096e1e16>