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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

October 23, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Randi Weingarten
President
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington DC, 20001

Dear President Weingarten:

I write to share concerns that a member of your leadership team is fostering a culture of antisemitism that alienates Jewish members of your community. As you know, in October 2024 Todd Wolfson, Ph.D., was elected as president of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and currently serves as an AFT Vice President. Given AFT's partnership with AAUP and the prominent role that Dr. Wolfson holds in your organization, I would like to know what actions AFT has taken to address the several instances of organizational antisemitism that have occurred under his leadership.

Jewish members of professional organizations, unions, and academic associations across the country have been marginalized and isolated. As a leading union for educators with a national presence, AFT has a responsibility to hold its leadership and partner organizations accountable to demonstrate to their Jewish members that their concerns are taken seriously.

On March 6, 2025, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) wrote AAUP a letter expressing concerns about a webinar it hosted for its members titled, "Scholasticide in Palestine"¹ Many Jewish members felt ostracized by the nature of this webinar, which exemplifies the growing concern that an academic association is not promoting academic freedom or the free exchange of ideas. The ADL/AEN letter also noted that the webinar was "taking place within a wider context of the AAUP being perceived as increasingly moving in a

¹ Letter from Anti-Defamation League, Academic Engagement Network, American Jewish Committee, Hillel International, and Jewish Federations of North America to American Association of University Professors (Mar. 7, 2025), <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/letter-american-association-university-professors-over-scholasticide>.

virulently anti-Israel direction, and as a result, growing insensitive and even hostile to the concerns of its Jewish and Zionist members.”²

In the six months since he received this warning from one of the nation’s leading organizations dedicated to fighting antisemitism, Dr. Wolfson has not only failed to address these concerns but has exacerbated them.

On August 19, *Inside Higher Ed* published an interview in which Dr. Wolfson described the “weaponization of antisemitism.”³ The former president of the University of California said this characterization “gaslights Jews, minimizing the alarms that Jewish communities have raised about discrimination on campus.”⁴ AAUP has a duty to protect all of its members from being marginalized, including the 73% of Jewish faculty who have reported observing antisemitism from faculty, administrators, and staff on their campuses.⁵

Dr. Wolfson has also made explicitly political statements, including that AAUP “believe[s] strongly that no weapons should be sent to Israel” and calling Vice President J.D. Vance a fascist.⁶ Advocating a political position as the president of an academic association stifles the voices of members who may think differently. He went on to say that AAUP “need[s] to make sure that we defend our members.”⁷

It is clear that Jewish members are not being defended, however. Jewish faculty members deserve to carry out their work free from discrimination. As an association with a national presence, it is concerning that AFT has not only failed to help solve this problem but has made it worse by allowing Dr. Wolfson to continue to serve in a leadership role.

² Letter from Anti-Defamation League, Academic Engagement Network, American Jewish Committee, Hillel International, and Jewish Federations of North America to American Association of University Professors (Mar. 7, 2025), <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/letter-american-association-university-professors-over-scholasticide>.

³ Ryan Quinn, ‘*Higher Ed Alone Cannot Save Democracy*’, Inside Higher Ed (Aug. 19, 2025), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/labor-unionization/2025/08/19/aaup-president-higher-ed-alone-cannot-save>.

⁴ Miriam Elman and Mark Yudof, *AAUP Should Rethink Stance on Israel, Antisemitism*, Inside Higher Ed (Sep. 11, 2025), <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2025/09/11/aaup-should-rethink-stance-israel-antisemitism-opinion>.

⁵ Anti-Defamation League and Academic Engagement Network, *Faculty Under Fire: Antisemitism and Anti-Israel Bias in Higher Education* (Sep. 10, 2025), <https://academicengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/AEN-ADL-Faculty-Survey-Finding--September-2025-1.pdf>.

⁶ Ryan Quinn, ‘*Higher Ed Alone Cannot Save Democracy*’, Inside Higher Ed (Aug. 19, 2025), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/labor-unionization/2025/08/19/aaup-president-higher-ed-alone-cannot-save>.

⁷ Ryan Quinn, ‘*Higher Ed Alone Cannot Save Democracy*’, Inside Higher Ed (Aug. 19, 2025), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/labor-unionization/2025/08/19/aaup-president-higher-ed-alone-cannot-save>.

To shed light on this serious situation, we request that you respond in writing to each of the following questions individually by November 6, 2025:

1. What changes, if any, is AFT seeking from AAUP in light of the concerns raised by the March 2025 letter from ADL?
2. How, if at all, are you engaging with partner organizations like AAUP to ensure that Jewish members are not experiencing antisemitism?
3. AFT represents over 270,000 higher education employees. How is AFT partnering with AAUP and other organizations focused on higher education to combat antisemitic harassment of Jewish faculty and students on its members' campuses?
4. Will the AFT publicly condemn Dr. Wolfson's remarks regarding the weaponization of antisemitism and referring to Vice President Vance as a fascist?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Bill Cassidy, M.D. in blue ink.

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Chairman

U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions