

ADOPTED BY THE AFT MA EXECUTIVE BOARD, FOR PRESENTATION AT THE AFT MASSACHUSETTS ANNUAL CONVENTION, SATURDAY, MAY 4, 2024, AND PRESENTED TO THE DELEGATES FOR ADOPTION

Condemning Hate and Affirming Freedom of Speech on Campus Adopted AFT Massachusetts Executive Board February 3, 2024

- WHEREAS:** intellectual freedom is foundational to a representative democracy and enshrined in the First Amendment freedoms of speech and expression, conscience and assembly; and
- WHEREAS:** people cannot truly exercise their rights without the open and robust debate of ideas, free from intimidation, violence and threat of violence; and
- WHEREAS:** U.S. colleges and universities are central to the development and promotion of intellectual freedom and should be sites of free and open debate, where difficult—sometimes painful—topics and opposing ideas should be discussed, challenged, and debated in ways that respect diversity of thought and the dignity and humanity of all; and
- WHEREAS:** to secure this freedom of thought and expression, institutions of higher education have an obligation to ensure environments where students, staff and faculty are free to engage in these exchanges without facing intimidation or racially, politically, or religiously motivated attacks and threats of violence; and
- WHEREAS:** faculty, staff and students have both rights and obligations in the exercise of intellectual freedom, including the responsibility to exercise their freedoms in ways that respect the rights of those with whom they disagree; and
- WHEREAS:** higher education as a site of free speech and protest is even more essential and necessary during times of unrest and uncertainty; and
- WHEREAS:** misinformation campaigns and legislative attacks are used to stoke the culture wars on campus and continue a cycle of hate and bigotry that has resulted in an increase in racism, anti-semitism, Islamophobia and anti LGBTQIA+ hate on campus; and
- WHEREAS:** the violence, threats of violence and intimidation we recently have seen on campuses create an environment that puts students, faculty, staff, and other members of the campus community at risk, making it an environment where freedoms are undermined, our country further divided, and our democracy further eroded; and
- WHEREAS:** students, faculty, staff and other members of campus communities have been subject to social media attacks, doxing campaigns and death threats; and

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WHEREAS: faculty and staff have faced disciplinary actions, including pressure to resign, and termination as a result of exercising their academic freedom in the classroom and their right to engage in protest and speak out:

RESOLVED: that the American Federation of Teachers of Massachusetts will continue to condemn hate in all its forms, affirm the dignity and humanity of all, and promote intellectual freedom and First Amendment freedoms as foundations of our democracy; and

RESOLVED: that the AFT Massachusetts will continue to fight hatred, racism, anti-semitism, Islamophobia and anti LGBTQIA+ hate and will vigorously defend the free speech rights of higher education students, faculty and the community, including the rights to peacefully assemble and protest, as well as defend our members who face discipline or termination of employment as a result of their protected speech or their participation in lawful protests on campus; and

RESOLVED: that the AFT Massachusetts will call on college and university administrations to respect academic freedom and debates on campus; to condemn hate and racially, politically, and religiously motivated attacks; and to ensure the safety of all members of the campus community; and

RESOLVED: that the AFT will provide sample resolutions, workshops, and guidance to our locals and state federations to support this work at the campus level.

(For discussion and vote at the AFT Massachusetts Annual Convention, May 4, 2024)

REVISION OR COMMENTS

ADOPTED _____

DEFEATED _____

TABLED _____