



Ángel Cabrera
President

4400 University Drive, MS 3A1, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-8700; Fax: 703-993-8880; E-mail: president@gmu.edu

November 2, 2016

Dave LaRock
Virginia House of Delegates
P.O. Box 6
Hamilton, VA 20159

Dear Delegate LaRock:

Thank you for your letter of September 28 concerning the Students for Justice in Palestine event to be hosted by a student group on our campus this weekend. We are sensitive to your concerns and acknowledge that the issue has generated some controversy. Please allow me to share the university's position on such events.

The conference is organized by a third party organization and is being hosted by a student group. Mason is the venue, not the sponsor of the event. Groups that seek to hold events on our campus must work with university departments – including Police and Public Safety, Parking Services and University Events. They are also required to comply with university policies and procedures.

As a large and very diverse institution, George Mason University is the home of more than 300 student organizations. All of these organizations have the right to host meetings and rent space on our campus for events, regardless of whether any member of the administration agrees or disagrees with the positions of said groups. The organizations are also required to reimburse the university for the expenses of services needed to guarantee the public safety of our campus.

Our university takes pride in its firm commitment to freedom of speech. Our motto, "Freedom and Learning," highlights our belief that you cannot have one without the other. We strongly encourage free and open dialogue – and that sometimes includes the exchange of controversial points of view that some may even find offensive. We encourage students to remain respectful of opposing viewpoints and discourage any act of incivility. We encourage students to consider countering speech they may oppose with their own speech, and activities that may be disagreeable to them with their own activities. Students can choose to engage with those who have opposing viewpoints or they can walk away. And we make it clear that, while the university supports everyone's right to express discontent in a lawful manner, it is also obligated to uphold the rights of those who visit our campus to engage in constitutionally protected activities. Our position on free speech earned Mason the highest rating from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a distinction shared by only 28 universities in the United States.

I appreciate your concerns and thank you for sharing them with me. While we may not agree on this matter, it is my hope that we can continue to engage in dialogue on these and other important issues that affect the university and the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ángel Cabrera". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature area.

Ángel Cabrera

cc: Delegate C. Matthew Fariss
Delegate Mark L. Cole
Delegate Christopher E. Collins
Delegate Jason S. Miyares
Delegate H. F. "Buddy" Fowler, Jr.
Senator Charles W. Carrico, Sr.