



Committee for Religious Liberty

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Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville
Chairman

December 11, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx:

Religious liberty and freedom of expression should be available to all Americans, including students on college campuses. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) strongly supports the language of the Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization at Section 122 regarding Campus Access for Religious Groups. The language protects religious student organizations at public universities from being discriminated against by state officials due to the organizations' religious beliefs, practices, speech, membership standards, or standards of conduct.

For many years, the Catholic bishops have been concerned about faith-based groups being excluded from college campuses simply because such groups require their leaders to agree with their religious tenets. In the 2012 core statement of the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, *Our First, Most Cherished Liberty*, the USCCB noted the exclusion of Christian students on campus as one of the threats to religious freedom in the U.S.

We are pleased that Congress is acting to protect religious student organizations that have been discriminated against on college campuses. Such organizations are not asking for special treatment but are simply seeking the freedom to be able to choose their leaders, like any other organization would in civil society. This is basic common sense. Just as the College Democrats should not be forced to allow a Republican to serve as the club's president, religious groups on campus should have the freedom to choose leaders who share and live out a particular faith.

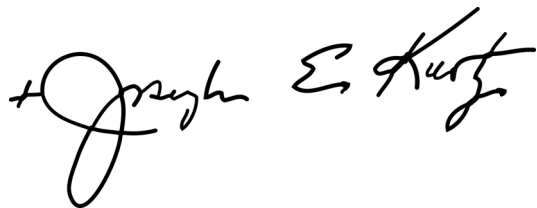
Given the stresses of college life, religious organizations often play a key role in helping students of faith navigate the challenges of being away from family and having to make a new set of friends, in addition to the rigors of collegiate academics that many students may be encountering. Students should be encouraged to form groups where they can find solidarity; they should not be kicked off campus simply because their views may be unpopular.

The HEA reauthorization language at Section 122 provides a remedy to this ongoing discrimination by withholding certain federal funding from public universities that use policies to

exclude religious student groups from campus because their speech is religious or because they require their leaders to be religious.

We are pleased to support the language at Section 122 and urge your colleagues to support it as well. The freedom to form student groups in accordance with one's faith is essential to our civil society. Thank you again for including protection for religious organizations in the HEA reauthorization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph E. Kurtz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "E".

Most Rev. Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville
Chairman, USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty