



Contact: Jenny Kefauver
703/850-3533

University of Maine Updates Bias Reporting System to Protect Free Speech

(Dec. 13, 2022) Orono, ME: In a victory for college students everywhere, the University of Maine has [revised its bias reporting system](#) after [Southeastern Legal Foundation](#) (SLF) directed the University to walk back its [unconstitutional policy](#). In a [letter](#) to the University, SLF warned that bias reporting systems infringe on students' freedom of speech because they give students the impression that they could be punished for engaging in protected speech. As a result, students self-censor rather than risk being reported to and disciplined by a campus bias response team for offending their peers.

Acknowledging this risk, the University of Maine has [updated its website](#) to clarify that it has no authority to punish students for exercising their freedom of speech. It further clarifies that students cannot even be investigated or questioned for a bias incident when the incident involves protected speech. And, [at SLF's request](#), the University now provides a link to its free speech policy to ensure that students understand the full extent of their rights when accused of so-called bias.

Director of SLF's [1A Project Cece O'Leary](#) says, "We are pleased that the University of Maine has come to its senses and recognizes that it cannot silence or deter its students from speaking. Bias reporting systems and bias response teams leave students feeling confused and unsure about what they can say on campus. They are the opposite of what college is meant to be: an open forum for students to engage in challenging discussions."

SLF General Counsel [Kimberly Hermann](#) explains, "This is not just a win for students on the University of Maine's campus; it is a win for students everywhere because yet another college has been forced to publicly walk back its empty threats through a bias reporting system. And we won't rest until every college fulfills its duty to protect and uphold free speech."