# **Sample Letter to State Officials**

**Free Speech**

**This is a sample letter template you can use to contact your state elected officials to urge them to support students and institutions considering legislation related to free speech on college campuses. This letter can be used in the following states, referring to the legislation indicated:**

California: SB 1381; SB 472; AB 2081; ACA 14

***These states have had legislation introduced during this biennial session, but it has not been acted on in 2018:***

Michigan: HB 4656; HB 4581; SB 350; SB 349

Ohio: HB 363

Pennsylvania: HB 95

**Complete the letter by filling in the information specific to you and providing an example or two of how students you work with benefit from state-level inclusivity investments in higher education to personalize your letter. You do not need to name specific students or indicate the institution you work at. You may also make other changes to the text in the template, to add or remove specific information and tailor your letter to focus on the issues most important to you.**

[date]

Dear [title] [last name]:

As your constituent living in [your city], I am writing today in reference to [pending legislation in the chamber of the official you’re writing].

As a student affairs professional, I see first-hand how students engage in conversations with those who have different perspectives and opinions on some of today’s most controversial and polarizing topics.

[Insert personal statement or story.]

On behalf of our students, I’m asking you to consider that [pending legislation in the chamber of the official you’re writing] may result in a chilling effect on speech, rather than protecting it. Rather than impose external conditions and restrictions on institutions and students, our institutions of higher education should be allowed the freedom to establish guidelines and rules for deliberation appropriate for their communities within our already established free speech case law. Oversight by external actors to ensure that rights are not infringed is appropriate, however interference by those actors without understanding of the nuance of campus culture risks doing more harm than good.

When large protests and counter-protests are expected to occur, college and university leaders spend countless hours planning and organizing both campus and community resources to ensure, above all, the safety of our students. Our college campuses are increasingly asked to cut costs not seen to be directly related to educating students. These unexpected and sometimes sudden protests involving free speech force college and university leaders to expend resources to keep the peace instead of investing in students' educations. Therefore, as a responsible steward of our public funds, I ask you to consider the student safety and funding implications for any legislation requiring college campuses to allow any and all to speak in campus buildings or grounds.

The future of our nation’s democracy depends on an educated citizenry capable of engaging in meaningful and respectful dialogue and deliberation with those with whom they disagree. I am relying on you to do what is right both for [your state]’s students and our nation as a whole.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to hearing from you about your plans to support our students and institutions of higher education.

Sincerely,

[name]

[address, including zip code]