

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 18, 2021

David S. Wilkes, M.D.  
University of Virginia School of Medicine  
200 Jeanette Lancaster Way  
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Dear Dr. Wilkes,

We write to inquire about the high-profile expulsion of the University of Virginia medical student Kieran Bhattacharya and the subsequent free-speech lawsuit filed against school officials.<sup>1</sup> As a group, we are made up of both representatives of the Commonwealth of Virginia and proud University of Virginia alumni.

The founders of the University of Virginia were deeply committed to the preservation of freedom, especially of speech and religion. James Madison, who sat on the original Board of Visitors, was instrumental in crafting and advocating for the First Amendment. Thomas Jefferson when describing the University said, “here, we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it.”<sup>2</sup> Given the University’s extensive history dedicated to our most fundamental freedoms, we find the circumstances surrounding Mr. Bhattacharya’s expulsion to be incredibly concerning and meritorious of examination and discussion.

According to news reports, Mr. Bhattacharya attended a University of Virginia School of Medicine panel discussion on microaggressions. At the panel, he asked a series of questions during the question-and-answer portion of the presentation.<sup>3</sup> In direct response to his questions, campus officials issued a “professionalism concern card” to Mr. Bhattacharya. Soon after, he was suspended and finally banned from campus. After listening to the audio recording of the discussion, we are deeply perturbed as to how these events transpired.<sup>4</sup>

We question how the University’s actions towards Mr. Bhattacharya support the ideals that Jefferson and Madison so ardently defended. These actions appear to starkly undermine Jefferson’s vision of this institution. As did the founders, we believe it is imperative that students can freely speak, question, and discuss ideas without fear of reprisal.

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<sup>1</sup> [Judge lets med student's free-speech lawsuit move ahead \(apnews.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [From Thomas Jefferson to William Roscoe, 27 December 1820 \(archives.gov\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [A Medical Student Questioned Microaggressions. UVA Branded Him a Threat and Banished Him from Campus. – Reason.com](#)

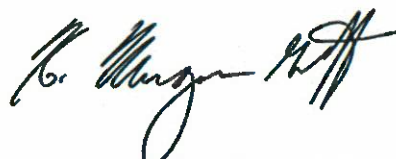
<sup>4</sup> [Microaggressions \(presented By AMWA\) by medgate | Free Listening on SoundCloud](#)

We recognize that this case is still under litigation, however as Members of Congress intrinsically vested in the preservation of the principles Thomas Jefferson so earnestly guarded, we respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss this series of events.

Sincerely,



CHIP ROY  
Member of Congress



MORGAN GRIFFITH  
Member of Congress



BEN CLINE  
Member of Congress



BOB GOOD  
Member of Congress

cc: James E. Ryan  
President  
University of Virginia  
1827 University Avenue  
Charlottesville, VA 22903