

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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June 17, 2026

Mr. James Cox Chambers  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
Bard College  
30 Campus Road, PO Box 5000  
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Mr. Chambers:

For decades, Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, along with their co-conspirators, accomplices, and enablers, operated a billion-dollar international sex trafficking operation. The House Committee on the Judiciary is investigating how this massive criminal conspiracy was able to operate successfully, and with impunity, for years and victimize more than 1,000 women and girls from around the world. Our investigation seeks to understand, among other things, how Mr. Epstein exploited and leveraged his multifarious ties in higher education, including to Bard College.

Following his 2008 criminal conviction for soliciting prostitution, Mr. Epstein used his wealth and connections to launch a campaign aimed at rehabilitating his public image.<sup>1</sup> As part of this effort, he forged deep and lasting connections with Bard College and its current President, Dr. Leon Botstein, who was once revered in the academic community. While Dr. Botstein will resign his position following a Bard-initiated investigation which concluded that his tenure was marked by substantial lapses in leadership and candor, I write about evidence that Bard's investigation overlooked deeper institutional flaws that may have allowed Mr. Epstein to promote and continue his sex trafficking operation.<sup>2</sup>

I therefore write to request you assist the Committee's investigation into understanding not only how Mr. Epstein exploited Bard to rehabilitate his public image and escape legal scrutiny, but also how Mr. Epstein's connections to Dr. Botstein and other Bard leaders helped him maintain and expand his illegal activities, including potentially trafficking women in New York and the Russian Federation.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Jodi Kantor et al., *Jeffrey Epstein Was a Sex Offender. The Powerful Welcomed Him Anyway*, N.Y. TIMES (July 13, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/13/nyregion/jeffrey-epstein-new-york-elite.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Sophie Brams, *Bard College President Exits as Epstein Ties Draw Scrutiny*, THE HILL (May 2, 2026), <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5860685-leon-botstein-resigns-bard-college/>.

Bard College’s Board of Trustees recently hired the law firm WilmerHale to conduct its own investigation into communications between Dr. Botstein and Mr. Epstein.<sup>3</sup> At first blush, the scope of WilmerHale’s investigation appears too narrowly tailored in that it solely focused on Dr. Botstein’s personal relationship and communications with Mr. Epstein. While the scope of this relationship is no doubt relevant, it does not address several other searching and pressing questions. Specifically, how deep did Mr. Epstein’s relationship with the school run? Did other professors and school leaders fraternize with Mr. Epstein? How did the Epstein relationship affect Bard and its students? Did Mr. Epstein use the school or his relationship with Dr. Botstein or other faculty and staff members to facilitate and extend his sex trafficking operation? If he did, who knew about it? Did the board know?

All of these questions were apparently—and strikingly—never posed during this investigation. They are certainly not answered in the sparse three pages of findings made available to the public and the Bard community.

The problematic nature of this review is almost immediately revealed by WilmerHale’s oddly worded acknowledgment that Mr. Epstein and Dr. Botstein’s conversations could have “alerted President Botstein to the *possibility* that he and Bard would be facilitating Epstein’s continued abuse of women, legitimizing Epstein, or exposing Bard students to a person like Epstein.”<sup>4</sup> However, after raising this troubling “possibility” that Bard and its leadership may have facilitated the abuse of young women and Bard students, the report apparently reaches no conclusions on these matters and does not discuss the concrete impact of Dr. Botstein’s relationship to Mr. Epstein on the Bard community or Mr. Epstein’s victims.

Our review thus far shows that there is a significant risk that Bard’s relationship with Mr. Epstein may have caused still unexamined harms and consequences.

Mr. Epstein benefited from a relationship with Bard and Dr. Botstein that was both financial and deeply personal. His foundation’s website listed the Bard High School Early College system as a grant recipient.<sup>5</sup> His VI Foundation publicly boasted that Mr. Epstein financed Bard High School Early College in New York City.<sup>6</sup> Public reporting also suggests Mr. Epstein directly gave Bard \$125,000 across multiple donations in 2011 and 2012 and donated dozens of laptops to Bard’s high school program in 2015.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Botstein also apparently knew

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<sup>3</sup> *Message from the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees*, BARD COLLEGE (May 1, 2026), <https://www.bard.edu/news/message-from-the-executive-committee-of-the-board-of-trustees-2026-05-01>.

<sup>4</sup> *Memo from WilmerHale to Bard College Board of Trustees*, WILMERHALE (Apr. 30, 2026) (emphasis added), [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl\\_FPhABe3hY8\\_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl_FPhABe3hY8_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view).

<sup>5</sup> Wayback Machine, *Jeffrey Epstein Philanthropy* (Apr. 24, 2014), <https://web.archive.org/web/20140324053157/http://www.jeffreyepstein.org/Recipients.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Press Release, *Jeffrey Epstein, Prominent Financier, Applauds Bloomberg’s Plan for New York Charter Schools*, PR NEWSWIRE (Mar. 15, 2013), <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/jeffrey-epstein-prominent-financier-applauds-bloombergs-plan-for-new-york-charter-schools-198490291.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Jodi Kantor et al., *Jeffrey Epstein Was a Sex Offender. The Powerful Welcomed Him Anyway*, N.Y. TIMES (July 13, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/13/nyregion/jeffrey-epstein-new-york-elite.html>; Khadeeja Safdar & David Benoit, *Epstein’s Private Calendar Reveals Prominent Names, Including CIA Chief, Goldman’s Top Lawyer*,

that a 2014 donation to the college by apparent co-conspirator Leon Black was made at Mr. Epstein's behest.<sup>8</sup> Despite Dr. Botstein's statements that "we never got any [more] money" from Mr. Epstein after 2015, public reporting reflects that he accepted another \$150,000 payment from Mr. Epstein in 2016, which he passed along to Bard.<sup>9</sup>

In the aftermath of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) release of the Epstein Files pursuant to the Epstein Files Transparency Act (EFTA), it has become clear that Mr. Epstein's donations were not happenstance. Bard courted Mr. Epstein aggressively, inviting him to campus and Bard High School to meet with Dr. Botstein, attend performances, and rub shoulders with Bard students at receptions. Although Dr. Botstein acknowledged "he was a convicted felon for a sex crime," he nonetheless had "about two dozen meetings" with Mr. Epstein over the next four years, most of which involved visiting his New York City townhouse, the same townhouse in which he allegedly abused and raped countless young women.<sup>10</sup>

WilmerHale's summary states that Dr. Botstein "minimized and was not fully accurate in describing his relationship with Epstein," but is light on specifics.<sup>11</sup> A review of Dr. Botstein's past statements on the issue over the course of many years of reporting, juxtaposed with evidence in the files, confirms that he consistently downplayed his contacts with Mr. Epstein.<sup>12</sup>

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WALL ST. J. (Apr. 30, 2023), <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/jeffrey-epstein-calendar-cia-director-goldman-sachs-noam-chomsky-c9f6a3ff>.

<sup>8</sup> Ginia Bellafante, *A College Is Split Over Its President and His Epstein Ties*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 2, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/02/style/bard-president-epstein-botstein.html>; *Memo from WilmerHale to Bard College Board of Trustees*, WILMERHALE (Apr. 30, 2026), [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl\\_FPhABe3hY8\\_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl_FPhABe3hY8_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view).

<sup>9</sup> Khadeeja Safdar & David Benoit, *Epstein's Private Calendar Reveals Prominent Names, Including CIA Chief, Goldman's Top Lawyer*, WALL ST. J. (Apr. 30, 2023), <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/jeffrey-epstein-calendar-cia-director-goldman-sachs-noam-chomsky-c9f6a3ff>; Vimal Patel, *Bard President Received \$150,000 from Foundation Created by Jeffrey Epstein*, N.Y. TIMES (May 17, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/17/us/leon-botstein-bard-college-jeffrey-epstein.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Khadeeja Safdar & David Benoit, *Epstein's Private Calendar Reveals Prominent Names, Including CIA Chief, Goldman's Top Lawyer*, WALL ST. J. (Apr. 30, 2023), <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/jeffrey-epstein-calendar-cia-director-goldman-sachs-noam-chomsky-c9f6a3ff>.

<sup>11</sup> *Memo from WilmerHale to Bard College Board of Trustees*, WILMERHALE (Apr. 30, 2026), [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl\\_FPhABe3hY8\\_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl_FPhABe3hY8_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view).

<sup>12</sup> EFTA02047292. Dr. Botstein has stated every visit was limited to 30 minutes and that Bard "had security ready" for the sex offender's visits to campus. But when Mr. Epstein wanted to land his helicopter on campus for a dinner and show, the President's office and the head of campus security happily obliged, with the latter saying he was "excited and honored to welcome back Mr. Epstein" to campus. Vimal Patel, *A College President Defends Seeking Money from Jeffrey Epstein*, N.Y. TIMES (May 5, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/05/us/jeffrey-epstein-leon-botstein-bard-college.html>; Vimal Patel, *A \$50,000 Watch and Friendly Notes: One College Leader's Ties to Epstein*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 6, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/06/us/leon-botstein-bard-college-epstein.html>; EFTA02131065; EFTA00399132; *Memo from WilmerHale to Bard College Board of Trustees*, WILMERHALE (Apr. 30, 2026), [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl\\_FPhABe3hY8\\_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1axoPl_FPhABe3hY8_xGminVeNgh0gnan/view); Khadeeja Safdar & David Benoit, *Epstein's Private Calendar Reveals Prominent Names, Including CIA Chief, Goldman's Top Lawyer*, WALL ST. J. (Apr. 30, 2023), <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/jeffrey-epstein-calendar-cia-director-goldman-sachs-noam-chomsky-c9f6a3ff>.

In exchange for his financial gifts, Mr. Epstein appeared to exercise influence not just with Bard's president, but also with its admissions office. In 2017, Woody Allen and Soon-Yi Previn texted Mr. Epstein that they could not "thank [him] enough for getting [their daughter] into Bard."<sup>13</sup> While Bard denied that Mr. Epstein had anything to do with this admission decision, Dr. Botstein intervened to help secure her admission and personally spoke to the admissions committee about her.<sup>14</sup> This vignette alone raises numerous questions, but chief among them is whether anyone in the admissions office knew that, by admitting this student, they were doing a personal favor for Jeffrey Epstein. The public summary of WilmerHale's investigation does not acknowledge this incident nor others where Mr. Epstein was able to utilize his connections with Bard for his personal benefit.

The WilmerHale summary makes only a glancing reference to publicly released emails reflecting instances where Mr. Epstein expressly leveraged his close association with Dr. Botstein to exert influence over at least one survivor of his abuse and further his conspiracy.<sup>15</sup> In 2013, an associate of Mr. Epstein responded on his behalf to a call for "foster-family" housing in New York put out by a European student studying violin at the Julliard School.<sup>16</sup> In order to "remove concerns" raised by the mother of the violinist who—after googling Jeffrey Epstein—expressed hesitation about letting him sponsor her daughter, Mr. Epstein told his associate that they "can contact the American Symphony Orchestra," where, as Director, Dr. Botstein could ostensibly vouch for him.<sup>17</sup> Mr. Epstein did not back down after the violinist declined his offer to pay for her housing; instead, he invited her to a star-studded dinner "with Woody Allen , and the conductor of the American Symphony."<sup>18</sup> He followed up, writing "leon bottstein , conductor and president of bard music festival , will be your dinner partner," which the victim replied was "a big honor."<sup>19</sup> Mr. Epstein continued to use Dr. Botstein's prominence and influence to lure the student, whom he described as "my tall blonde violinist."<sup>20</sup> He asked for and received from the Bard leader symphony tickets, a backstage meeting, career advice for the young woman, and the opportunity to play for experts.<sup>21</sup> We now know this student came to suffer traumatic abuse at the hands of Mr. Epstein. The WilmerHale summary is silent as to what Dr. Botstein's own files contain about this woman, who at Bard knew about her abuse, or what anyone at the College did to stop it.

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<sup>13</sup> EFTA01208496.

<sup>14</sup> EFTA00710494; EFTA01208494.

<sup>15</sup> Emily Sachar, *Epstein Used Botstein's Prestige and Connections to Recruit and Support One of His Victims, a Violinist from Europe*, THE DAILY CATCH (Feb. 13, 2026), <https://www.thedailycatch.org/articles/epstein-used-botstein-and-his-prestige-and-connections-to-recruit-and-support-one-of-his-victims-a-violinist-from-europe/>.

<sup>16</sup> EFTA00968092.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> EFTA00968343; EFTA01960648.

<sup>19</sup> EFTA00968343.

<sup>20</sup> Emily Sachar, *Epstein Used Botstein's Prestige and Connections to Recruit and Support One of His Victims, a Violinist from Europe*, THE DAILY CATCH (Feb. 13, 2026), <https://www.thedailycatch.org/articles/epstein-used-botstein-and-his-prestige-and-connections-to-recruit-and-support-one-of-his-victims-a-violinist-from-europe/>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

Bard also seemingly materially assisted Mr. Epstein's scheme to traffic his victims to the United States. In July 2018, Mr. Epstein informed one foreign college-hopeful with visa issues that he had had lunch with the "president" of Smolny College, Bard's dual enrollment program in Russia. That president had assured him of the student's admission to the dual enrollment program that would eventually land her in the United States.<sup>22</sup> Months earlier, Mr. Epstein emailed Dr. Botstein in his usual, typo-ridden style "**the russains name is [redacted] i would appreciate her going to see an advisor that co=ld heop her decide on smolny**" [sic].<sup>23</sup> The president replied the same day writing "[redacted] should get in touch directly with me....I will then s=nd her inquiry to [a Bard employee], who will handle it from there."<sup>24</sup> Mr. Epstein forwarded the chain to a redacted person, referring to Dr. Botstein as the "**president of smolny.**"<sup>25</sup>

These were apparently not the only episodes of Mr. Epstein seeking to traffic women through Bard's dual enrollment program. In June 2019, mere days before he was arrested for his massive sex trafficking conspiracy, Mr. Epstein again pushed a survivor with a "university desire" (whom he had seemingly abused since she was a child) to attend Smolny, where "they can prepare [her] for university."<sup>26</sup> Again, WilmerHale's summary makes no mention of the apparent fact that Mr. Epstein utilized connections to Bard leadership to traffic women across international borders. Indeed, it does not mention Smolny at all.

In the press release announcing the completion of WilmerHale's investigation, you announced that Bard was "committed to strengthening its policies" and that "[f]unds associated with Jeffrey Epstein will be directed to organizations that support survivors of sexual harm."<sup>27</sup> It is unclear how Bard can make promises to strengthen its policies when it is unclear what actually happened and the extent to which Jeffrey Epstein used his Bard connections, with Dr. Botstein or others, to recruit victims and conduct his sex trafficking operation. Until then, this investigation and the changes it has prompted are at best incomplete and, at worst, misleading. As a Bard student pointed out in her recent op-ed in the student newspaper, "the investigation of the Bard/Epstein ties by WilmerHale seems a good start, but ... [i]f Bard wishes to escape Epstein's shadow, the transformation" to come must surely be more sweeping.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, at a recent open house with students, even Dr. Botstein himself acknowledged "that the fault that enabled a monster like Epstein to access this campus is much greater than a single individual."<sup>29</sup>

While more robust internal controls and giving to organizations that support survivors of abuse are steps in the right direction, these measures are neither new to Bard nor should they be

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<sup>22</sup> EFTA01619225.

<sup>23</sup> EFTA02491562.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* The referenced Bard employee is currently the college's Director of Global Outreach.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> EFTA01617696.

<sup>27</sup> *Message from the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees*, BARD COLLEGE (May 1, 2026), <https://www.bard.edu/news/message-from-the-executive-committee-of-the-board-of-trustees-2026-05-01>.

<sup>28</sup> Sam Barrett, *What I Saw at the Open House*, BARD OBSERVER (Feb. 2026), [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=observer\\_20s](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=observer_20s).

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

the end of the road.<sup>30</sup> To demonstrate Bard's commitment to change and to provide transparency and make amends for the survivors, please assist the Judiciary Committee in shedding light on how, for years, Mr. Epstein was able to use his relationship with Bard leaders to further this shocking criminal scheme. In order to assist in this important investigation, as an initial step we request you make Dr. Botstein available for a transcribed interview with this Committee. Please contact Democratic Committee staff no later than July 1, 2026, to schedule this interview.

In addition, to fully inform this interview and our oversight, please provide the following records and information, no later than 5:00 p.m. on July 1, 2026, from 2011 to the current day:

1. Any final reports from WilmerHale's investigation.
2. All documents reviewed during the course of WilmerHale's investigation, including but not limited to email communications, text messages, records relating to Mr. Epstein's donations and visits, and admissions documents.
3. A list of all members of the Bard community—including leadership, professors, staff, students, or other individuals—interviewed as part of the WilmerHale investigation, to include the time of the interview, the date of the interview, and their position at Bard.
4. All reports, memoranda, or other documents reflecting the evidence or conclusions of any other Bard internal investigations into or involving Jeffrey Epstein or his associates.
5. All notes, transcripts, agendas, and other records reflecting the content of Board of Trustees meetings relating to Jeffrey Epstein;
6. All Bard College records relating to Jeffrey Epstein, Darren Indyke, Leon Black, Richard Kahn, Ghislaine Maxwell, or their associates, including but not limited to correspondence; donation or tuition payment records; records of their attendance at events; and student admission decisions.

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<sup>30</sup> Dr. Botstein was interviewed by the *New York Times* about his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein in 2019. In 2023, the *New York Times* asked you to comment for an article regarding Bard's giving policies in light of this issue. That same year, *Inside Higher Ed* sent Bard multiple requests to comment for an article in which experts suggested changes to your giving policies and that you pass Mr. Epstein's donations on to charities supporting abuse victims. In February of this year, Dr. Botstein told the student newspaper that he would recommend such donations be made. See Jodi Kantor et al., *Jeffrey Epstein Was a Sex Offender. The Powerful Welcomed Him Anyway*, N.Y. TIMES (July 13, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/13/nyregion/jeffrey-epstein-new-york-elite.html>; Vimal Patel, *A College President Defends Seeking Money from Jeffrey Epstein*, N.Y. TIMES (May 5, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/05/us/jeffrey-epstein-leon-botstein-bard-college.html>; Josh Moody, *Dealing with Disreputable Donors*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (May 3, 2023), [www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/executive-leadership/2023/05/31/when-criminals-offer-gifts-college-presidents](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/executive-leadership/2023/05/31/when-criminals-offer-gifts-college-presidents); Mica Rajakumar et al., *"I Should Have Stopped Communication with Him Right There," President Botstein on his Relationship with Jeffrey Epstein*, BARD OBSERVER (Feb. 2026), [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=observer\\_20s](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=observer_20s).

7. The total amount of payments, and a list of payments and gifts broken down by year, made to Bard or Bard affiliates by individuals and entities associated with Jeffrey Epstein, including but not limited to Darren Indyke; Leon Black; Richard Kahn; Ghislaine Maxwell; Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation; the Jeffrey Epstein Foundation; Hyperion Air LLC; C.O.U.Q. Foundation and Enhanced Education; Mc2; Harry Beller; The YLK Foundation; Erika Kellerhals; Southern Trust Company, Inc.; Southern Financial LLC; Haze Trust; Environmental Solutions Worldwide, Inc.; The 1953 Trust; Plan D, LLC; Great St. Jim, LLC, Nautilus, Inc.; Poplar, Inc.; Gratitude America Ltd.; or Butterfly Trust.
8. The total amount of payments, and a list of payments and gifts broken down by year, made to Jeffrey Epstein or his associates by individuals or entities associated with Bard College.
9. All communications between Jeffrey Epstein or his associates and staff of Bard College and Smolny College.
10. All communications by staff of Bard College and Smolny College regarding matters involving Jeffrey Epstein or his associates.

In order to help protect the privacy of Mr. Epstein's victims, in responding to this request, please redact the names and personally identifiable information (PII) of any and all individual students. If you have any questions regarding these requests, and whether information should be disclosed, please contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-3951 or under separate cover.

I look forward to your prompt attention to this matter, the fundamental importance of which is, no doubt, recognized by you and other college leaders.

Very truly yours,

  
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Jamie Raskin  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman