

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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August 18, 2026

The Honorable Harmeet K. Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Dhillon:

Antisemitism at American universities and medical schools is real. It needs to be addressed seriously.

But your “investigation” into antisemitism was fake, a pre-baked frame-up operation thoroughly political in nature. Before an actual investigation took place and regardless of what you actually found, the whole project was designed to harass professors and administrators at major universities, to curtail their freedom of speech and academic freedom, and to strip targeted institutions of hundreds of millions of dollars in grants that they had already been awarded on the merits of their applications. This sham investigation is and will remain a shameful stain on the record of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Civil Rights Division and represents a clear and present danger to American academic preeminence in the world.

Yesterday, the Committee on the Judiciary received a detailed whistleblower report explaining exactly how you and the President exploited genuine concerns voiced about Jewish safety on Ivy League campuses for the purposes of scoring partisan political gains and attacking your perceived institutional enemies in academia.¹

In this protected disclosure, a veteran DOJ attorney, as well as several other government employees assigned to your “Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism,” have described how they witnessed Trump Administration officials abandon basic principles of legal ethics to harass and intimidate universities on utterly false, tendentious, and distorted grounds. For some of these investigations, including the ones that took place at Brown University, Columbia University, and Harvard University, Administration officials expressed an awareness that their investigation and conclusions were supported neither by the facts nor the law. In one case, after being informed that there was no evidence to support a finding of a Title VI violation based on antisemitism at Brown, a senior Trump Administration official at the Department of Health and Human Services

¹ Letter from Dana L. Gold, Andrea Meza & Jasmine Yunus, Whistleblower Disclosure Concerning Title VI Enforcement, Investigative Integrity, and the Administrations of Federal Civil Rights Law, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT (Aug. 17, 2026).

(HHS) agreed there was “not a Title VI violation,” but “there’s no way we’re going to get a letter of no violation cleared.” He proceeded to push for, and obtain, a settlement with the school despite knowing that there were no facts to justify the desired finding of a violation. The Trump officials involved also expressed a craven willingness to racially and ethnically profile faculty members while ostensibly investigating racial and ethnic discrimination. In one instance, an official instructed investigators to specifically interview Middle East Studies professors at a university, particularly focusing on Muslims, noting that one such interview of a Muslim professor was not to “get information,” but instead to see “what he will say.”²

These reports, from people with first-hand knowledge of President Donald Trump’s general attack on universities, reveal multiple radical departures from the rules of professional responsibility. Under your supervision, Trump Administration officials abandoned their duty as government lawyers to impartially investigate the facts and apply the law. Instead, they used the legitimate goal of investigating antisemitic discrimination on campus as a pretext for retaliating against, and punishing, universities, faculty, and students for engaging in protected speech disfavored by President Trump and his Administration. In other words, you seem to have overseen a large-scale fraud perpetrated against the American people and our universities, attacking disfavored groups on knowingly false grounds and exacerbating fear and division among different groups in our society.

I am writing therefore to investigate the full extent of your misconduct and to determine how Title VI must be altered in light of this Administration’s shockingly reckless and unethical actions.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal financial assistance, like universities.³ This protection extends to those subjected to antisemitic harassment. On February 3, 2025, DOJ formed a multi-agency “Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism,” ostensibly to “root out anti-Semitic harassment in schools and on college campuses,” following reports of antisemitic incidents at protests at colleges and universities. The Task Force included DOJ, HHS, and the Department of Education and was coordinated through DOJ’s Civil Rights Division.⁴

Title VI investigations are obviously subject to constitutional restrictions and structured carefully to ensure that the target of an investigation does not face unfair or arbitrary freezing of federal funds. As shared in the disclosure, Title VI and related statutes “strictly prescribe the process by which federal funds may be terminated or suspended: a finding of violation, written notice, an opportunity for hearing, approval by designated officials, and a program-specific nexus to the alleged conduct.”⁵ The government cannot simply label protected speech as

² *Id.*

³ Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.

⁴ Press Release, *Justice Department Announces Formation of Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism*, U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE (Feb. 3, 2025), www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-formation-task-force-combat-anti-semitism.

⁵ Letter from Dana L. Gold, Andrea Meza & Jasmine Yunus, Whistleblower Disclosure Concerning Title VI Enforcement, Investigative Integrity, and the Administrations of Federal Civil Rights Law, GOVERNMENT

“harassment” or take an adverse action against a university because it disagrees with the politics of its faculty or staff. Similarly, the government cannot freeze funds to a school under other contract provisions when unable to prove that a violation occurred.⁶

Yet that is what DOJ and HHS did here. DOJ leadership attempted to evade Title VI’s procedural safeguards by improperly broadening the investigations, picking predetermined targets on ideological grounds, then cutting off funds for unrelated reasons in violation of the due process rights enjoyed by both individuals and universities.

The primary whistleblower on this case of official misconduct was a seasoned and distinguished DOJ litigator who was assigned to work on investigations of medical schools—including Harvard, Columbia, Brown, and Cornell—under your Task Force at HHS. The investigation was unusual from the start. DOJ attorneys received a memorandum about the Title VI investigations informing them that the investigations were based on a single, thinly sourced “*New York Post* article that alleged anti-Semitic activities at numerous medical school commencement ceremonies.”⁷

Then-HHS Acting General Counsel Sean Keveney and HHS Office for Civil Rights Associate Deputy Director Daniel Shieh, who were put in charge of HHS’s efforts, quickly revealed the improper purpose of this investigation: according to the disclosure, they announced in an all-hands meeting that their predetermined goal was to force “schools to disgorge money received by HHS and force the universities to make up the lost grant and contract fees from their endowments.” Before assembling any facts that could remotely resemble a finding of a Title VI violation, Mr. Keveney explained that to achieve this preassigned conclusion, he wanted to include “poison pills” in proposed settlement agreements with universities, including admissions of guilt that a university would “never be able to accept,” in order to force the universities into litigation. Mr. Shieh also noted that “the goal is compliance, but pulling money is the tool,” demonstrating the Administration’s intent to pull funds from the schools irrespective of investigative findings.⁸

The pretextual nature of the entire enterprise is further revealed by the fact that after the initial investigation of the claims made by the *New York Post* turned up no violations, HHS leadership did not simply close the investigation. According to the disclosure, “Shieh admitted he did not think the facts surfaced through investigation to date would justify a finding of a Title VI violation at the medical schools,” but “that his solution was to expand the investigations to the entire universities in order to substantiate a finding.”⁹ In other words, Trump Administration lawyers essentially admitted that they were out on an open-sea fishing expedition and, when they

ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT (Aug. 17, 2026); 42 U.S.C. § 2000d-4a(2)(A); 42 U.S.C. § 2000d-1; 45 C.F.R. § 80.7–80.11.

⁶ Title VI, 28 C.F.R. § 50.3, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2011-title28-vol2/pdf/CFR-2011-title28-vol2-sec50-3.pdf>.

⁷ Letter from Dana L. Gold, Andrea Meza & Jasmine Yunus, Whistleblower Disclosure Concerning Title VI Enforcement, Investigative Integrity, and the Administrations of Federal Civil Rights Law, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT (Aug. 17, 2026).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

found no evidence to support their pre-baked conclusions, simply kept sailing and expanding the search for anything that would justify the expedition.

The Trump Administration's fraudulent and weaponized "investigation" thus imposed blatantly unfair, prejudiced, costly, and punitive government actions against each targeted university:

Brown University

- **DOJ cut hundreds of millions of dollars in funding from Brown due to "violations" before any investigation had begun in earnest, much less been completed.** DOJ attorneys were ordered to investigate Brown for Title VI violations, but after just a day or two, "they were shocked to learn that the Administration had cut \$500 million in previously awarded federal funding from Brown overnight, reportedly in connection with their own antisemitism investigations." DOJ attorneys wrote to HHS leadership noting that they were "just starting to dig into the facts regarding Brown" at the time the funding was rescinded, and it would therefore be completely inappropriate for funding to be cancelled on Title VI grounds at that juncture. Mr. Keveney summoned these attorneys to HHS, told them not to take any written notes of the meeting, and berated them for providing advice on the legality of the Administration's actions, telling them like a child: "Now you will see angry Sean."¹⁰
- **The Trump Administration illegally targeted and profiled Muslim professors.** Mr. Shieh explained a plan to systematically interview Middle East Studies professors, particularly Muslim faculty in the field, noting that an interview with one professor was designed not to "get information" but to see "what he will say." This professor was targeted for an interview despite no allegation "that this professor had engaged in antisemitic activity."¹¹
- **The Trump Administration forced Brown to settle despite investigating attorneys informing their superiors there were no Title VI violations on campus.** DOJ and HHS attorneys did not find facts sufficient to justify any finding of deliberate indifference to antisemitism on Brown's campus. According to investigators, Brown had quickly and forcefully addressed any reports of antisemitism, and "one Jewish witness even stated that the campus was a great place to be Jewish." Attorneys suggested sending Brown a closure letter reflecting the team's conclusion that they had found no Title VI violations, but Mr. Shieh conveyed that Trump Administration officials would never accept that result because "everything is sequenced"—indicating that the government was merely using antisemitism as a pretext to claw back funds and punish universities for imaginary offenses. Mr. Shieh further admitted that there was "not a Title VI violation" at Brown but said that "there's no way we're going to get a letter of no

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

violation cleared.” In July 2025, Brown reached a voluntary federal settlement with the Trump Administration to resolve investigations into alleged antisemitism.¹²

Columbia University

- **The Trump Administration rushed a review of factual findings against Columbia for alleged Title VI violations.** Mr. Shieh sent DOJ investigators a draft of factual findings of alleged Title VI violations by Columbia, which would be used to justify clawing back hundreds of millions of dollars from the university. Rather than being allowed to conduct a thorough analysis, DOJ attorneys were only given a few hours for their review, despite repeatedly stating that this was not remotely enough time to conduct a thorough evaluation of the findings.¹³
- **The Trump Administration dismissed concerns from DOJ investigators about the legitimacy of the factual findings against Columbia.** Even in this limited timeframe to conduct an evaluation, DOJ investigators identified numerous false statements in the draft. Significantly, the draft also improperly identified clearly protected First Amendment expression, such as attending a protest or writing an open letter, as Title VI violations. Moreover, these allegations were laid out in this draft based solely on publicly available reporting or court filings, without any independent investigation or corroboration by investigators, flouting the usual protocol in a Title VI investigation that requires independent corroboration. Investigators highlighted these deficiencies for Mr. Shieh, but many of them went unaddressed.¹⁴

Harvard University

- **Trump Administration officials acted in bad faith drafting a settlement agreement for Harvard.** One official, Mr. Shieh, explained that the initial plan was for Harvard to be made “the first example” to America of its campaign to subdue academic institutions, but when negotiations broke down, officials tried to make Columbia the example. These statements indicated that the goal of these investigations was not to investigate actual episodes of antisemitic discrimination and rectify supported Title VI violations but to punish schools already judged guilty and ensure their preemptive and costly compliance with Administration demands. Mr. Keveney similarly told a whistleblower he believed Harvard would settle because they were “over a barrel.”¹⁵

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

- **Trump Administration officials expressed an intention to circumvent the Constitution.** HHS attorneys showed a DOJ whistleblower the proposed and extremely broad settlement with Harvard. The DOJ attorney stated that such terms—including installing a provost to oversee the entire academic curriculum, ending diversity, equity, and inclusion programming on campus, and investing in programs in Israel—would likely violate First Amendment protection of academic freedom and were unrelated to rectifying any specific finding of potential antisemitic discrimination on campus. In response, Mr. Keveney acknowledged the potential unconstitutionality of such terms but stated that perhaps the Administration could force the schools to install their own monitor, thereby allowing the Trump Administration to suppress and censor First Amendment protected speech but maintain plausible deniability.¹⁶

The disclosure alleges that these facts show that the “outcomes of the [Title VI] investigations were predetermined” and “were subordinate to political priorities rather than the enforcement of civil rights.” Those conclusions seem undeniable.¹⁷ From the start of the Trump Administration’s ferocious attack on universities, it has been apparent that its investigations have been structured deliberately to harass and intimidate rather than protect anyone from discrimination. These credible new disclosures, although limited to the experience of several professionals involved, allow the world to look under the hood and see just how far the Trump Administration strayed from any notion of professional responsibility, public ethics, or legal candor in its attacks on perceived political enemies in academia.

It also points to the possibility of significant personal misconduct. Despite the gross abuse of power detailed in this document, Sean Keveney now serves as the Food and Drug Administration’s Chief Counsel where he has authority over 150 employees. Daniel Shieh has attempted to orchestrate similar strong-arm settlements, including a bogus investigation into Title IX violations in Maine that the state rejected outright.¹⁸ Both Mr. Keveney and Mr. Shieh, by undertaking these investigations for an improper purpose, have clearly violated professional rules for attorneys.¹⁹ They have also seemingly attempted to circumvent the First Amendment and, to the extent their pretextual claims were submitted to a court, potentially obstructed justice or suborned perjury.

The full extent of your misconduct remains unclear. At the very least, you have shown gross negligence in supervising the activities of your office. It is also a distinct possibility that you deliberately orchestrated a scheme to attack universities, their faculties, and their

¹⁶ *Id.*; Press Release, *Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism Letter to Harvard University*, U.S. DEP’T OF EDUCATION (June 30, 2025), www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/task-force-combat-anti-semitism-letter-harvard-university.

¹⁷ Letter from Dana L. Gold, Andrea Meza & Jasmine Yunus, Whistleblower Disclosure Concerning Title VI Enforcement, Investigative Integrity, and the Administrations of Federal Civil Rights Law, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT (Aug. 17, 2026).

¹⁸ Randy Billings & Daniel Kool, *Trump Administration Rejected Idea of Pausing Title IX Actions to Let Maine Legislature Consider Reforms*, PORTLAND PRESS HERALD (Apr. 10, 2025), www.pressherald.com/2025/04/09/us-dhhs-and-maine-discussed-bills-to-bar-transgender-participation-in-sports/.

¹⁹ Under ABA Model Rule 8.4, it is professional misconduct to engage in conduct that violates the professional rules, involves dishonesty or misrepresentation, or is “prejudicial to the administration of justice.”

administrators for political purposes while defrauding the American people and the courts. To answer and account for this potentially monumental abuse of power, I request that you appear before the Judiciary Committee for a transcribed interview. Please contact Committee Democratic staff no later than September 1, 2026, to schedule this interview. Please also provide the following records by that same date:

1. All communications between your office or the Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism and then-HHS Acting General Counsel Sean Keveney and HHS Office for Civil Rights Associate Deputy Director Daniel Shieh;
2. All memoranda or case assessments, including drafts, discussing the sufficiency of the Task Force's evidence for finding a Title VI violation at Harvard, Brown, Cornell, and Columbia;
3. All records and communications from the Task Force, your office, or any DOJ component referring to plans to interview Muslim faculty or Middle East Studies professors during Title VI investigations;
4. All records related to the April 4, 2025, decision and announcement that the federal government had blocked federal funding for Brown;
5. All records related to the investigative report or summary into Brown, including communications between you and any Task Force members regarding the summary; and
6. All communications between you and the White House referring to or referencing potential settlement agreements with Harvard, Brown, Cornell, and Columbia.

In addition, all records related to this investigation, including communications between DOJ and the White House, should be preserved in accordance with federal law, including any messages on private devices, Signal, Truth Social, WhatsApp, X, or other platforms.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Very truly yours,



Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman

Office of Professional Responsibility, U.S. Department of Justice