

Office of Institutional Equity

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Caroline Laguerre-Brown, J.D.
Vice Provost for Institutional Equity

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VIA Email

Andrew Guernsey
aguernse1@jhu.edu

Dear Mr. Guernsey:

I write in response to your email communication of April 29, 2013 seeking the views of the Office of Institutional Equity ("OIE") as to whether the alleged publicized actions of Voice for Choice ("VFC") to file a harassment suit against you and JHU Voice for Life ("VFL") constitutes a violation of JHU's Anti-Harassment Policy.

My view is that the reported activities do not constitute a violation of either JHU's Anti-Harassment Policy or the Undergraduate Student Code of Conduct. In fact, pursuing a harassment complaint in good faith is protected activity under both federal law and under university policy. Accordingly, this current activity would not give rise to disciplinary charges or the denial of any privileges. Johns Hopkins is committed to providing the opportunity for redress to anyone who believes they were the victims of discrimination or harassment, and we will take immediate action to address any instances of discrimination or harassment that are demonstrated to take place.

As you note in your April 29, 2013 email, and I restate here the views that I shared in my April 2, 2013 email to VFL: Both the Anti-Harassment Policy and the Undergraduate Student Code of Conduct underscore the free and open exchange of ideas that is fundamental to the University's mission. The Department of Education has issued formal guidance to universities that emphasizes just this point: in seeking to "prevent or redress discrimination prohibited by Title IX . . . a school must formulate, interpret, and apply its rules so as to protect academic freedom and free speech rights." In this regard, the Johns Hopkins Anti-Harassment Policy specifically states that it is "not the University's intent in promulgating this policy to inhibit free speech or the free communication of ideas by members of the academic community" and the Conduct Code notes that membership in the university community carries with it an obligation to "protect the university as a forum for the free expression of ideas."

As I stated in my earlier email to VFL, this response is not a finding or ruling regarding any future activities in which either group may engage. OIE has the responsibility to review and investigate any allegations of harassment brought by a member of the Hopkins community, which are reviewed on a case-by-case basis consistent with JHU policy and OIE's established protocol.

Sincerely,



Caroline Laguerre-Brown