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SPEECH FIRST

Speech First Obtains Preliminary Injunction Prohibiting the University of Houston from Restricting Student Speech

Houston, TX (May 23, 2022) – Speech First, a nonprofit membership association working to combat restrictions on free speech and other civil rights at colleges and universities across the country, obtained a preliminary injunction in [Speech First v. Khator, et al.](#) prohibiting the University of Houston from unconstitutionally chilling student speech through its overbroad “harassment” policy.

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas granted Speech First’s Motion for [Preliminary Injunction](#) to prohibit the University from enforcing wide-sweeping restrictions on protected First Amendment expression. The Court held that Speech First has standing to challenge the University’s “harassment” policy and is likely to prevail on the merits of its claim.

“This is another huge victory for students in Texas. The court’s ruling sends a clear message to all universities that restrictions on student speech will not be tolerated simply because listeners find certain ideas to be offensive or controversial,” **said Speech First’s Executive Director Cherise Trump**. “The University’s policy subjects students to formal discipline for ‘harassment’ for merely expressing mainstream conservative opinions that other students find objectionable. This overbroad restriction on speech forces students to habitually self-censor and refrain from beliefs that are inconsistent with the ‘consensus’ on campus. Higher education should be a sanctuary for debate where students can express their beliefs and engage with opposing viewpoints.”

Background:

Speech First filed its complaint against the University of Houston on February 23, 2022, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas. Speech First alleged that the University’s “harassment” policy was unconstitutionally overbroad and punished speech based on content and viewpoint. The policy’s expansive definition of “harassment” prohibited a wide array of protected speech, including “denigrating jokes” and “negative stereotyping.”

Under the harassment policy, the University reserved the right to punish student speech anywhere, anytime: on campus, off campus, or on social media. Supreme Court precedent dictates that colleges can only restrict speech when it is so “severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive” that it crosses the line into harassing conduct.

See the original press release [here](#) and the complaint [here](#).

To schedule an engagement with Speech First, please contact Caroline Thorman at caroline@athospr.com and info@athospr.com.

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