

* PRESS RELEASE * FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION *



SPEECH FIRST

Speech First Petitions the United States Supreme Court to Hear Lawsuit Against Indiana University

Washington, D.C. (September 27th, 2024) –Speech First, a nonprofit membership association working to combat restrictions on free speech and other civil rights at colleges and universities across America, has [filed a writ of certiorari](#) to the United States Supreme Court regarding their lawsuit against Indiana University over violations of students’ First and Fourteenth Amendment rights.

[Speech First is suing Indiana University](#) on behalf of our student members for IU’s Bias Response Team (BRT), an unconstitutional and a far-reaching policy that solicits anonymous reports from students on one another for “bias incidents.” This reporting system is solely designed to deter, discourage, and otherwise prevent students from expressing disfavored views about the political and social issues of the day.

IU’s Bias Response Team marials the authority of university administrators to police speech that is motivated by “bias.” The University uses a circular and unclear definition of what a “bias incident” actually is, describing it as “any conduct, speech, or expression, motivated in whole or in part by bias.”

IU’s policy is so broad that anything students find offensive can be reported. Under this policy, students could be reported for something as simple as questioning why the Biden Administration has added “gender identity” as a protected class under Title IX, or for stating that unchecked illegal immigration will lead to an increase in crime.

Furthermore, IU states that you don’t even have to experience the “bias” yourself. You merely have to witness an incident of “bias” or “observe it online” or just be “concerned, without being directly impacted.” Reportable offenses can occur on or off campus, including on social media. After a report is filed, the University maintains a record of all reports and students accused of “bias incidents” can be referred for formal disciplinary proceedings. There is no opportunity to face one’s accuser and no transparency on how the records are being used or referenced by the university. One student reportedly was overlooked for promotion at their place of work on campus because of a Bias Incident Report against them for “saying something offensive,” (the reporter had forgotten what was actually said at the time of making the report and was anonymous).

IU’s policy is designed to suppress speech. Speech First’s students actively self-censor knowing they could be reported for expressing any views someone disagrees with. This campus environment has led

to the decay of open inquiry and rigorous discourse that should be central to higher education. The BRT's bureaucratic and disciplinary processes combined with the vague, overbroad, and viewpoint-based definition of "bias incident" violates students' First and Fourteenth Amendment rights.

Speech First has undertaken a number of [legal actions](#) against colleges and universities on this issue and won.

[Cherise Trump](#), Executive Director of Speech First, issued the following statement:

"We are hopeful that the Court will hear our case. Through our work at Speech First, we have seen how universities across the country find insidious and subversive ways like BRTs to censor, coerce, and silence students' speech. Universities like IU act with complete disregard for the U.S. Constitution, the American tradition, and the ultimate purpose of higher education which is to seek truth. IU would instead have their campus act as a training ground for a specific political agenda and ideology where anyone who dissents is reported and shut down. Nationwide, Speech First has fought universities over their Bias Response Teams and we have won in multiple circuit courts. But the circuits are split, so students need the U.S. Supreme Court to step in."

To schedule an engagement with Speech First, please contact Michael Hensley at michael@athospr.com and info@athospr.com.

###