



October 11, 2019

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Robert King, Assistant Secretary  
Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Mr. King,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Association for Jewish Studies, an international learned society of approximately 2,000 members, I write to express our concern about your letter of August 29, 2019 to Terry Magnuson, Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of North Carolina, stating that "most of the Duke-UNC CMES [Consortium for Middle East Studies] activities supported with Title VI funds are unauthorized and that Duke-UNC CMES may not qualify as an eligible National Resource Center."

The Association of Jewish Studies strongly values the centrality of academic and intellectual freedom of teaching, research and extramural activities. Based on this core organizational value, we write to express our concern of your letter's intent to interfere directly with curricular decisions in area studies.

The study of foreign languages and cultures is at the heart of the intellectual agenda of scholars of Jewish studies. Jewish Studies scholars and students benefit from Title VI funding for foreign language instruction and understand that good language instruction involves teaching about the cultures, arts, politics, and history of the people that use that language.

Based on our values and direct involvement with Title VI efforts on university campuses around the country, we join with our colleagues

in other learned societies in opposing this unprecedented and counterproductive intervention into academic curricula and programming that threatens the integrity and autonomy of our country's institutions of higher education.

We strongly urge you to recognize the importance of academic freedom and relying on scholars with expertise in languages, area studies, and cultures to make curricular decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Hayes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "C".

Dr. Christine Hayes  
President