Tampa
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS
& FEDERATION

PRESS RELEASE

Tampa JCCs and Federation
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Tampa Jewish Community Relations Council Commends USF for Swift and Effective Action

May 5, 2024-- The Tampa Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) applauds the University of South Florida (USF), its President, Reah Law, and her team for enforcing USF policies and preventing student protestors and outside agitators from disrupting the education of thousands of students.

Since the October 7 massacres by the terrorist organization Hamas, the Federation's JCRC has sharpened its focus on combating campus antisemitism. After representatives from the JCRC met with and alerted Attorney General Ashley Moody about the intimidation of Jewish students at USF, and other universities and Ashley Moody issued a letter reminding USF of its obligations under Title VI and of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requesting USF to take a more forceful and public position against antisemitic behavior on campus. USF's administration, including Rhea Law, has also met with and worked with representatives of the JCRC in addressing antisemitic and anti-Israel activity on campus. The JCRC has also continued to monitor anti-Jewish hostility at USF and JCRC representatives regularly communicate with USF's Office of President.

Anti-Israel student demonstrators and agitators at USF and elsewhere have tried to distract the public from the truth about Hamas starting this war with the invasion of Israel and massacres of over a thousand men, women and children in their homes with inhuman barbarity that defies description. Many of these same students and agitators celebrated the October 7, 2024 attacks.

Jonathan Ellis, Chair of the Tampa JCRC, said, "We take the situation at USF very seriously and we are committed to ensuring our Jewish students there are safe and feel welcome on the campus. We will continue to work very closely with the administration to ensure that all laws, policies and rules are enforced appropriately on all parties involved. We are avid defenders of freedom of speech and the right to protest but calls for violence, acts of violence and disruption of campus life and education are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

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I do want to take this opportunity to thank Rhea Law and her team at the university for being responsive to our community. Among other things, they have been in ongoing contact with several key stakeholder group; sat and at our request, even watched the 42-minute unedited horrific video of the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack with Mike Driquez, Deputy Consul General of Israel for Florida; They have attended several Jewish events in the community to demonstrate their commitment to Jewish Tampa; They are covering the cost of 24/7 police protection of the Hillel Jewish Student Center at USF and we know of no other university doing the same and they have met with students and professionals on campus to hear their concerns directly. We believe this is a much more positive and proactive effort than at many other universities around the country, but there is still much more work to be done."

For more information, contact Mark Segel, Executive Director of Combating Antisemitism, Tampa JCCs & Federation at mark.segel@jewishtampa.com.

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