



Nov 29, 2022

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To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in full support of the Testing Your Faith Act. As the Executive Director of the Hillel at Miami University, I have experienced first hand the struggles of our Jewish students attempting to juggle the expectations of professors with the desire to participate and cultivate their religious identities as Jews.

More and more, Jewish students are being doubted and questioned as to why they are requiring a day or two off for observance of their faith. The misunderstanding and/or ignorance of the Jewish community's holidays has led to many students not wanting to even bother requesting a class off in order to observe their religious holiday. When students do get the courage to inform their professor that they'll be missing class due to the observance of a Jewish holiday, they are often met with frustration, doubt, and/or an assumption that the student is taking off from class just for a break. It's degrading and demoralizing. Our Jewish students know that major or minor events would never be scheduled on a Christian holiday so the 'hoops' that Jewish students have to jump through just to observe one day of a holiday feels all the more invalidating to their identity as a Jew.

In a year that has seen an increase of aggression against the Jewish student community at Miami—including everything from the desecration of our Hillel's Sukkah when 3 undergraduate students knocked it on the ground during a drunken night out to the drawing of swastikas and prominence of White Nationalist propaganda that has shown up on campus grounds—Jewish students are more than aware that they are on the 'outside'. Having to ask special permission just to observe the fundamental holidays of their faith only acts to exacerbate that outside status.

I strongly encourage the passing of the Testing Your Faith Act on behalf of all students who wish to explore their religion and grow their spiritual identity. College is the time of exploration and searching; a time when many students are seeking comfort and growth from wherever they can find it. Why not make it easier for them to find it within their faith?

With Gratitude,
Whitney Fisch, MSW
Executive Director
Hillel at Miami

