

March 24, 2021

Provost Elizabeth Sayrs and Dean Florenz Plassmann
1 Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701

Dear Provost Sayrs and Dean Plassmann:



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
FOUNDATION

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Hasan Kwame Jeffries
President

J. Bennett Guess
Executive Director

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio, I am writing to express our serious concerns about the potential defunding of Ohio University's Center for Law, Justice, and Culture and possible removal of Mr. Larry Hayman's full-time position with the CLJC program. Under Mr. Hayman's leadership, CLJC has flourished, playing a crucial role in the development of curious legal minds and setting up students for success. CLJC's supportive groups and innovative programs have especially uplifted students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged.

Since CLJC's inception, the ACLU of Ohio has been a close partner in supporting its mission to unite those who share a common interest in the law's constitutive and formative role in cultural, political, and social life. The potential loss of this substantive university offering, at a time of great partisan divide, political incivility, and legislative gridlock would have serious confounding consequences for our society, state, and nation. This is a profoundly wrong move at exactly the wrong time in the life of Ohio University and our democratic republic.

The ACLU has annually welcomed participants in CLJC's Summer Law & Trial Institute into our office to dialogue about civil liberties and constitutional rights issues, and to help young students explore potential career paths in the law, social justice, and community service, especially as these issues and fields apply to the needs of the Appalachian region.

Ohio University has one of our strongest collegiate ACLU chapters in the state. Under Mr. Hayman's mentorship, the ACLU of OU hosts events for the entire university and is a critical connection for our civil liberties work on behalf of the people of Southeast Ohio.

We urge Ohio University to fully fund CLJC's programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level and to continue to support Mr. Hayman's position as the CLJC Pre-Law Specialist. Ohio needs these students to be well-prepared upon graduation, and the CLJC has a strong track record of producing exemplary student leaders who go on to become high impact changemakers as Ohio University alumni across the state and nation.

I strongly urge your careful consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Bennett Guess".

J. Bennett Guess
Executive Director
bguess@acluohio.org