

LDB Praises UC Regents' Rejection of Weak Intolerance Statement

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Washington, D.C.: The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (LDB), a national civil rights organization based in Washington, D.C., commended the Regents of the University of California this morning for their vigorous statements concerning anti-Semitism during last week's Regents Meeting at U.C. Irvine. In particular, LDB praised the Regents for rejecting a proposed weak Statement of Principles on Intolerance that failed to mention anti-Semitism. At today's Regents Meeting at U.C. Irvine, the U.C. Regents agreed that the originally proposed statement would not be adopted as it failed to address a need to define and combat anti-Semitism on U.C. campuses, which was the original purpose of the proposed statement.

LDB President Kenneth L. Marcus commented: "The Regents of the University of California took an important step in addressing the growing problem of campus anti-Semitism. We know today that universities nationwide have struggled to address this problem for lack of a clear definition of and policy to combat anti-Semitism. We had previously warned the university against issuing a vague, generic statement that would add nothing to the university's current policies. If they are going to enter this discussion at all, they should do so clearly, boldly, and with clearly defined terms. We have long urged university officials to adopt the State Department's definition of anti-Semitism. Now that they Regents have established a working group to develop a stronger statement, we hope that they provide a definition of anti-Semitism that is at least as clear as what the U.S. State Department has already issued."

The Brandeis Center, along with other organizations dedicated to combating anti-Semitism and protecting Jewish students' civil rights, has long been active in advocating for a substantial, clearly defined statement against anti-Semitism. Over the summer LDB issued a letter urging the U.C. regents to adopt the U.S. State Department's definition of anti-Semitism, illustrating how a better definition can help to educate a college community about contemporary anti-Semitism and defend students from it. The letter explains "Good definitions not only educate people about how quickly discourse can slip, even unwittingly, into dark corners but also and equally importantly foster legitimate intellectual and political exchanges by increasing awareness about where lines are drawn." Many anti-Semitism scholars, including LDB President Kenneth L. Marcus, also issued a letter to the regents on adopting this definition in the face of the disturbing rise of anti-Semitism on university campuses. They argue that the definition "offers an essential tool for identifying and educating about all forms of contemporary anti-Semitism" as it "reflects the current scholarly understanding of the close relationship between historic anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism."