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Assembly Education Committee

Assembly State & Local Committee

Assembly Fin. Inst. & Ins. Comm.



**NEW JERSEY GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Dear President Holloway and Members of the Board of Governors,

I write today out of deep concern and disappointment over Ramy Youssef's selection as this year's commencement speaker for Rutgers-Newark.

Graduation is intended to be a moment of unity — a time when students of all backgrounds come together to celebrate years of hard work, achievement, and the beginning of their next chapter in life. It is meant to be a joyous and uplifting occasion, free from the divisiveness of political or ideological agendas.

Selecting a speaker who is widely seen as polarizing is not in line with those ideals. At a time when the war between Israel and Hamas continues to provoke strong emotions on all sides, and when antisemitism has tragically reached record highs across our country and on university campuses in particular, inviting such a figure risks alienating and isolating many Jewish and Israeli students. It sends an unfortunate and deeply hurtful message to a significant part of your student body: that their identities, experiences, and concerns are secondary.

Rutgers must be a place where all students — regardless of race, religion, nationality, or background — feel safe, respected, and welcome. Your Jewish and Israeli students deserve the same sense of belonging that every student at Rutgers should enjoy.

With all due respect, given the serious concerns raised about antisemitism on Rutgers campuses since Hamas's brutal massacre on Oct. 7, 2023, this decision seems to double down on a troubling pattern rather than correct it.

It is my sincere hope that you will reconsider this decision in light of the impact it will have on your Jewish students, their families, and the broader community. Leadership sometimes requires difficult decisions — but always demands sensitivity, fairness, and a commitment to fostering true inclusivity.

I urge you to uphold the values that Rutgers aspires to represent. Graduation should not be marred by controversy or by actions that leave part of the student body feeling uncomfortable, scared, or unwelcome. It should be a day that lifts every student up.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I remain hopeful that Rutgers will take the necessary steps to ensure that *all* students know they have a proud and valued place at your university.

Sincerely,

Assemblyman Avi Schnall  
New Jersey General Assembly, District 30