

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY
PROFESSORS,

and

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS,

Plaintiffs,

v.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE. *et*
al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:25-cv-02429-MKV

DECLARATION OF TODD WOLFSON

I, Todd Wolfson, hereby declare as follows:

1. I currently serve as President of the American Association of University Professors (“AAUP”), a plaintiff in this action. I have served in that position since June 2024. I also previously held various leadership roles for the Rutgers University chapter of AAUP, including as the chapter’s President and Vice President.

2. I am also a trained anthropologist and an Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers. I received my Ph.D. in Anthropology and Social and Cultural Foundations of Education from the University of Pennsylvania.

3. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this declaration in support of Plaintiff’s Motion for Preliminary Injunction, and if called as a witness in this action, I could and would testify competently to these facts.

4. The AAUP is a membership association and labor union of faculty and academic professionals with chapters at colleges and universities throughout the country.

5. The AAUP is a 501(c)(6) organization headquartered in Washington, D.C.

6. The AAUP became an affiliated national regional council of the American Federation of Teachers (“AFT”) on August 1, 2022. As a result of that affiliation, all AAUP members are also AFT members, with the full rights and privileges of all AFT members.

7. The primary mission of the AAUP is to advance academic freedom and shared governance in higher education, define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education, promote the economic security of academic workers, and ensure higher education’s contribution to the common good.

8. The AAUP was founded by John Dewey and other preeminent scholars in 1915 to defend the ability of scholars, researchers, and educators to teach, write, and research without political and economic retaliation based on their viewpoints. Since its founding, the AAUP has helped to shape American higher education by developing the standards and procedures that maintain quality in education and academic freedom in this country’s colleges and universities.

Harms to AAUP’s Members

9. The AAUP has approximately 44,000 members on college and university campuses across the country, including approximately 254 members at Columbia University. Many of these members, including members at Columbia, rely on federal grants to support their research, scholarship, and teaching activities.

10. I am aware of and can identify AAUP members who have lost funding as a result of the federal government’s cancellation of \$400 million in federal funding to Columbia University announced March 7, 2025. Those AAUP members have suffered and are continuing to suffer

irreparable harm to their research, work, reputation, and ability to pursue their careers and work as a result of those funding cancelations.

11. I am aware of and can identify AAUP members who rely on federal funding that the federal government threatened to cancel in its March 13, 2025 letter to Columbia University demanding certain concessions as a precondition for continuing Columbia's financial relationship with the federal government. Many of those AAUP members are suffering harm as a direct result of that threat, including because the continued viability of their work is now uncertain, making it difficult to plan, maintain professional relationships, and recruit potential staff to work on their projects. Those AAUP members will also suffer irreparable harm to their research, work, reputation, and ability to pursue their careers and work if the federal government cancels that funding.

12. I am aware of and can identify AAUP members at Columbia University who are concerned about losing their jobs or ability to continue to support their livelihoods, either as a direct result of the Trump Administration's cancelation of approximately \$400 million in federal grants and contracts to Columbia University, or because they fear they may be let go by Columbia if they engage in speech the Trump Administration disfavors as Columbia seeks to placate the Trump Administration and encourage it not to carry out its threats to cancel additional federal funding, and who now feel limited in what they can say in and outside the classroom for fear of the loss of additional funding to themselves or the University.

13. I am aware of and can identify AAUP members at Columbia University who have started to self-censor their language both inside and outside the classroom following the Trump Administration's decision to cancel \$400 million in funding to Columbia University without following applicable statutory requirements or other law and its threats to cancel additional federal

funding. These members fear that they may face backlash from Columbia and may lose their jobs as a result of exercising their academic freedom.

14. I am also aware of and can identify AAUP members at other colleges and universities who are similarly concerned about losing their jobs or ability to support their livelihoods, and who now feel limited in what they can say in and outside the classroom for fear of the Trump Administration summarily canceling federal funding to their programs, universities, or colleges without following applicable statutory requirements or other law in the same way that the Trump Administration has canceled funding at Columbia and threatened to cancel additional federal funding at Columbia and at numerous other universities and colleges.

Harms to AAUP as an Organization

15. The Trump administration's cancellation of \$400 million in federal funding to Columbia University and demands that Columbia take additional steps as a "precondition" for any continued federal financial assistance to the University have harmed and are continuing to harm AAUP as an organization.

16. As noted above, the primary mission of the AAUP is to advance academic freedom and shared governance in higher education, define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education, promote the economic security of academic workers, and ensure higher education's contribution to the common good. The Trump administration's summary cancellation of \$400 million dollars at Columbia and threats to cancel more federal funding at Columbia and other universities and colleges are directly impairing the AAUP's mission.

17. As part of its core activities, the AAUP regularly consults, works with, and represents local chapters and individual members regarding academic freedom, shared

governance, and other issues involving the employment relationship between AAUP members and their university employers, including but not limited to collective bargaining.

18. For example, the AAUP maintains a standing committee, known as Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which “[p]romotes principles of academic freedom, tenure, and due process in higher education through the development of policy documents and reports relating to these subjects and the application of those principles to particular situations that are brought to its attention.”

19. The AAUP also conducts investigations of individual complaints of institutions violating academic freedom principles in relationship to AAUP members, issues reports of the results of some of those investigations, and advocates with those institutions to seek to remedy such violations and prevent future violations from occurring. Such investigations are authorized by the AAUP Executive Director, and conducted by a subcommittee appointed by the Executive Director.

20. Through its local chapters, including the Columbia AAUP chapter, the AAUP also provides for the representation of individual members regarding academic freedom, shared governance, and due process issues in proceedings before their university employers. Columbia AAUP members in the Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies (“MESAAS”) Department are entitled to such representation. The AAUP has diverted internal resources of staff time and expenses to assist Columbia members in the MESAAS Department and other departments prepare to respond to the Trump Administration’s demands that the MESAAS Department be put under academic receivership, and to respond to the internal governance steps Columbia has announced it is taken with respect to the MESAAS Department and other academic departments in response to the Trump Administration demand.

21. I understand that Title VI and its implementing regulations require the government to provide notice and a hearing, followed by a finding on the record, before terminating federal funding to any program or part thereof based on a violation of Title VI. I understand that the government did not provide notice, or hold any hearing or provide any opportunity to be heard, before terminating \$400 million in federal funding to Columbia and did not provide notice, or hold any hearing or provide any opportunity to be heard, before announcing that Columbia's compliance with the demands in the government's March 13, 2025 letter was a "precondition for formal negotiations regarding Columbia University's continued financial relationship with the United States government." If the government had provided notice and held a hearing as required, both the AAUP and individual AAUP members would have sought to participate in that hearing directly or as amici curiae, as permitted by the applicable regulations, to protect the federal funding supporting the work of AAUP members at Columbia and to protect the principles of academic freedom, due process, and shared governance that are at the core of the AAUP's mission.

22. The Trump administration's March 7 cutoff of funding to Columbia; its related public statements on March 7, March 13, and March 24; and other public statements made by government officials disrupt and frustrate the AAUP's efforts to secure principles of academic freedom, shared governance, and due process at Columbia and elsewhere.

23. The government's actions and statements have made it more difficult and resource-intensive for the AAUP to carry out its representation of chapters and individual members, in particular on issues of academic freedom. Because of government pressure on Columbia and other universities to abandon their commitment to academic freedom, shared governance, and due

process principles, the AAUP must now expend more time and money to ensure that its members' rights in these regards are protected.

24. The Trump Administration's funding cancelation and threats to cancel more funding at Columbia and other universities and colleges also make it harder for the AAUP to achieve its goals of promoting academic freedom, shared governance, and due process principles in part because Columbia has taken steps in direct response to the Trump Administration's actions to undermine those principles, and Columbia and other higher educational institutions are less willing now to protect those principles in the face of threatened funding cuts from the federal government. The Trump administration has directly impaired the AAUP's mission by pressuring Columbia to curtail speech and academic freedom on campus.

25. For example, in response to the significant influx of inquiries from chapter leaders and members regarding the effect of the government's actions on members' academic freedom, shared governance, and due process rights, and to ensure that individual members are adequately represented before their university employers, AAUP staff have had to conduct nationwide calls and virtual meetings with chapter leaders regarding the government's actions and how to represent individual members in the face of such actions.

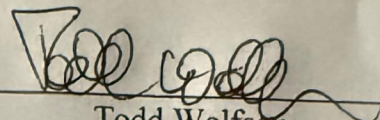
26. The AAUP has also redirected staff to be present physically on Columbia's campus to speak with chapter leaders and members regarding how to respond to the government's actions and Columbia's March 20, 2025 capitulation to the government's demands.

27. The AAUP's Committee A in particular has spent countless hours speaking with AAUP members at Columbia regarding the government's demand that Columbia place stricter controls on the MESAAS Department.

28. The government's actions and statements have also caused a pervasive sense of fear and intimidation among AAUP members. Because of the government's conduct and the threats of further cuts to research funding, I am aware that some AAUP members no longer feel comfortable participating in and supporting the AAUP's activities, or asserting their academic freedom, shared governance, and due process rights. As just some examples, in direct response to the government's cuts of federal funding to Columbia and threats to cut additional federal funding to Columbia and to other universities, some AAUP members at universities across the country have cancelled conferences, pulled papers set for publication, decided not to teach classes or certain topics within those classes that may be perceived as being at odds with the Trump administration's preferred viewpoints, stopped attending talks, refrained from attending lawful protests, and stepped down from their AAUP chapter board.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on this 31 day of March 2025.


Todd Wolfson