

February 14, 2018

Dear students,

Over the last week I have heard from many of you who have expressed concern, anger and frustration over my endorsement of Kenneth Marcus for Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights. I value your feedback and want you to know I am listening.

I recognize that, for many of you, this decision is deeply troubling because of concerns you have about enforcement of Title IX, support for survivors of sexual assault and harassment on campus, and the rights of the LGBTQ community. It was never my intent to minimize these important issues or suggest Hillel does not stand with you in these fights, and I apologize.

I want to be absolutely clear that I see ensuring a safe campus community as one of Hillel's most important goals. Every student has the right to live free of violence. Jewish history and the teachings of our tradition call on us to stand up on behalf of all those who are vulnerable. Our Torah instructs us not to stand idly by while our neighbors are harmed. And our people's experiences of suffering call on us to lead toward a society in which all of us use our power responsibly. Hillel holds these values dear, and we will redouble our effort to live them each day.

I know that Title IX is an essential tool in ensuring the safety of all students against sexual harassment and assault on campus. With sexual assault being so prevalent on college campuses, I understand many of you have either experienced this yourself or know someone who has. I understand that you feel strongly about policy being in place to protect your peers. I share your desire to have campuses be a safe place for all—across class, race, religion, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In addition to the work we've done over the years to shift the culture on campus, I commit to use my position and power as CEO of Hillel International, the largest Jewish student organization in the world, on over 550 campuses, to support survivors of sexual assault and make campuses the safest places possible. I plan to share your stories and your perspectives with Mr. Marcus with the same passion that you have shared them with me. I will ensure that all Hillel professionals are trained on sexual assault and harassment, including Title IX education, supporting victims, and bystander intervention. We will also support innovative programs on these issues that are created and piloted by students and local Hillels.

My colleagues and I have heard from many student survivors of sexual assault over the past week. I am heartened by the courage, the passion, and the intellect I have seen from you and your classmates, even when it was directed at me. I want to make clear to you my intention was never to cause additional pain, and I am truly sorry that I did. It is my sincerest hope that Hillel and the Hillel professionals you've trusted to share in your joy and pain throughout your college career and beyond remain people you will turn to. They will continue to support you. Hillel will continue to support you.

I know this is not the end of the conversation. But I hope you believe, as I do, that actions speak louder than words. I hope you continue to see your Hillel and Hillel International as true partners in the fight for the safety and well-being of all students on campus.

Best,



Eric D. Fingerhut  
President and CEO, Hillel International  
he/him/his