

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Dr. Adena Williams Loston, President
St. Philip's College
1801 Martin Luther King Drive
San Antonio, TX 78203

Dear President Loston,

As Members of the Texas delegation in the United States Congress, we are deeply concerned that St. Philip's College and the Alamo Colleges District appear to be violating federal and state civil rights laws by rashly and wrongfully terminating employees based on unsubstantiated allegations.

It is our understanding that in January 2023, your institution terminated the employment of Dr. Johnson Varkey, a longtime adjunct professor, for teaching standard human biology and reproduction principles consistent with the school-approved curriculum that he had taught for consecutively for nearly twenty years.

Curiously, Dr. Varkey consistently received exemplary reviews throughout his tenure at St. Philip's until November 28, 2022, when four students walked out of his class after he articulated the basic and widely-accepted fact that sex is a fixed characteristic determined prior to birth by X and Y chromosomes. Less than eight weeks after this bizarre demonstration, Dr. Varkey received a Notice of Discipline and Termination of Employment and Contract letter from your administration alleging that the college "received numerous complaints" about his "religious preaching, discriminatory comments about homosexuals and transgender individuals, anti-abortion rhetoric, and misogynistic banter" and that Dr. Varkey's teaching "pushed beyond the bounds of academic freedom with [his] personal opinions that were offensive to many individuals in the classroom." In public statements since his firing, Dr. Varkey stated unequivocally that he has never preached in his classroom or deviated from the syllabi, lesson plans, or teaching materials provided by his department. He also expressed disappointment with your administration's failure to honor its own policies, which in this case, would have afforded Dr. Varkey notice of the allegations against him and the opportunity to respond to them in kind. Instead, St. Philip's hastily fired Dr. Varkey and only offered a list unsubstantiated allegations.¹

Regrettably, this incident is not an isolated occurrence at St. Philip's College and the broader Alamo Colleges District. Instead, recent history reveals a pattern of targeting and penalizing educators who refuse to capitulate to the prevailing progressive narrative.² Even more disconcerting is the suspicion that these dedicated professors often find themselves in the crosshairs merely because their sincerely-held religious convictions happen to align with the

¹ Ryan Quinn, *'Preaching' in Biology Class?*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Sept. 28, 2023), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/academic-freedom/2023/06/28/professor-says-he-was-fired-allegedly-preaching/>.

² Gigi De La Torre, *Professor made student 'uncomfortable' with open debate, gets fired*, THE COLLEGE FIX (Jul. 12, 2023), <https://www.thecollegefix.com/professor-made-student-uncomfortable-with-open-debate-gets-fired/>.

substance of their teaching.³ In the case of Dr. Varkey, a devoted Christian, a volunteer associate pastor at a San Antonio church, and the voice behind a Bible-teaching radio ministry, it is painfully evident that religious bias played a predominant role in his termination. This form of discrimination not only flies in the face of the United States Constitution's Free Exercise Clause, but it also places St. Philip's College and the Alamo Colleges District in direct opposition to the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act, as well as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁴

Given that St. Philip's College receives federal funding, we hope that your administration can address this matter with both swiftness and clarity. Accordingly, we request St. Philip's College and the Alamo Colleges District to provide the following by January 18, 2024:

- 1) All documented instances of Dr. Varkey deviating from approved curriculum or teaching materials during his tenure at St. Philip's, prior to the incident in question.
- 2) All written complaints filed against Dr. Varkey, redacted to exclude personal identifiers to the student or faculty which provided the complaint(s);
- 3) Any other supporting evidence for or against Dr. Varkey's termination;
- 4) The details of the internal process followed by your administration for the investigation into determining Dr. Varkey's immediate termination;
- 5) The names and titles of those involved with the decision to immediately terminate Dr. Varkey;
- 6) The detailed reasoning behind Dr. Varkey's immediate termination;
- 7) A comprehensive list of all St. Philip's policies that function to protect professors from the whims of 'cancel-culture' as it applies to both their official teaching role and outside of it; and
- 8) For the information requested in Question 1 through 3, please indicate if any of these instances were documented after November 2022, regardless of when they are alleged to have occurred.

Our education system must foster an environment where freedom of speech, differing opinions, and intellectual diversity are protected rather than punished. If it is determined that Dr. Varkey educated his students in a manner consistent with widely-recognized biological facts as well as the school-approved curriculum, then we urge for his immediate reinstatement without penalty.

³ David Glasser, *Fired Christian biology professor files religious discrimination complaint*, THE COLLEGE FIX (Jul. 12, 2023), <https://www.thecollegefix.com/fired-christian-biology-professor-files-religious-discrimination-complaint/>.

⁴ Jorge Gomez, *Biology Professor Fired for Teaching...Biology*, FIRST LIBERTY (Jun. 23, 2023), <https://firstliberty.org/news/biology-professor-fired-for-teaching-biology/>

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this matter. We look forward to your response.

For liberty,



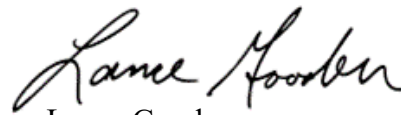
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U.S Senator



Chip Roy
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Michael Cloud
Member of Congress



Lance Gooden
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