



# NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate release:**  
Tuesday, May 7, 2024

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## **NYPIRG STATEMENT ON RECENT CAMPUS PROTESTS**

**Statement by Damien Andrade, Chairperson, NYPIRG Board of Directors, Brooklyn College Student**

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) was built upon the foundations laid by the 1960's Student Free Speech Movement, civil rights organizing and the Vietnam War protests. As the Vietnam War was winding down, NYPIRG's founding students sought to create a sustainable institution in which students could continue to lead on the critically important issues of the day. That leadership role was envisioned as not confined to campus, but as active members of society looking outward into the surrounding community and into the future.

Directed by students and based on campuses, NYPIRG promotes civic engagement and believes students should take an active role in speaking out on issues they care about. As a core principle we believe colleges and universities should be havens for robust debate, discussion, and learning — not sites of censorship. The U.S. Constitution gives student groups the right to peacefully organize, assemble and speak out on critical issues -- local, national, and global -- such as the war and humanitarian emergency in Gaza.

Those rights must be protected *and* encouraged. As long as the speech of concerned students does not cross the line and lose its protected status, students must have the right to peaceably assemble and express their concerns on and off campus. This is America: Colleges must protect *all* students and their rights to raise their voices, not just those whose views align with powerful institutions or *any* set of political beliefs.

- NYPIRG supports students' right to peacefully assemble and express their views on campuses.
- NYPIRG urges college and university administrations to allow the protestors the space to peacefully lend their voices to issues that concern them.
- NYPIRG calls upon the college and university leadership and any law enforcement to refrain from removing or arresting any demonstrators who are peacefully exercising their First Amendment rights.

The nation's founders wisely put the Right to Free Speech in the First Amendment because it is essential to safeguarding democracy. That is as true today as it was in 1776 and 1964.

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