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**AFTER CENSORSHIP, HARVARD LAW SCHOOL STUDENT GOVERNMENT FORMALLY DEMANDS ANSWERS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ADVOCACY**

*Student leaders pass twelve resolutions identifying unresolved student issues and revealing Administration’s resistance to student advocacy at HLS*

*(March 28, 2022, Cambridge)* – On March 8, 2022, Student Government Co-Presidents Faith Jackson and Gabrielle (Gabe) Crofford were told that their regular meeting with Dean John Manning would be canceled unless they changed the agenda and uninvited the student advocates that were to join. The agenda item proposed by Student Government – HLS’s “[Summer Contribution Policy](https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/sfs/student-contribution-from-summer-income/)” – is one of the most important issues to students, since it [claims about 90% of a student’s net summer income after a small living stipend.](https://www.wbur.org/news/2021/07/12/need-based-financial-aid-summer-contribution) This ultimatum comes at the end of a frustrating year for Student Government advocates, who have faced pushback from university officials on nearly every agenda item they brought to Administration.

In response, Student Government representatives mobilized to [pass twelve resolutions](https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/studentgovernment/resolutions/) on unresolved student issues, each containing a student advocacy history and calling on administrators to take immediate action. This slate represents the largest number of resolutions passed, not just in any given session, but in any recorded year of Student Government history.

“While Summer Contribution may be the straw that broke the camel’s back, this sequence of events underscores a much larger issue at HLS,” said Gabe Crofford (’23). “That issue is that students – when advocating on causes as large as mental health and as small as free coffee – feel that Administration forces us to yell just to be heard.” Gabe and her Student Body Co-President, Faith Jackson (‘22), argue that the collapse of channels for student advocacy will only compel students to escalate their advocacy to public space. Just last year, HLS graduate Amanda Chen published an article in the *National Lawyers Guild Review* entitled [“How to Suppress Student Speech: The Harvard Law School Playbook.”](https://nlgmass.org/wp-content/uploads/How-to-Suppress-Student-Speech.pdf)

The resolutions were authored by some of HLS’s newest students, 1L Representatives Austin Powell (‘24) and Soraia Esteves (‘24), over Spring Break. “From talking to many students in different affinity groups and student organizations, it was very apparent how the Administration responds to students,” Austin said. “I hope these resolutions show that students do care about having a supportive Administration that actually takes care of students and responds to their feedback and criticism.”

For Soraia, these resolutions are a natural outgrowth of her development as a career advocate. “I came to HLS to learn to be a better advocate,” she says. “Thanks to my professors and classmates, I have learned more than I could have imagined. Now, it is my hope that this Administration will welcome that advocacy and take meaningful steps towards making HLS a better place for its students, professors, and staff.”

Several of the resolutions target urgent issues for HLS students, with Summer Contribution creating the greatest strain. “The administration didn’t want to deal with us until a viral tweet put them under a spotlight,” said Velo-Vincent Van Houden (‘22), a student advocate who has long raised awareness about the consequences of the policy. After the tweet, meetings were held, but students never saw the process move forward despite university promises of positive change. “Meanwhile, they continue to take summer earnings and as a result, students have had to take out additional loans for life-saving medical care,” Velo commented. “They even asked for an accounting of funeral expenses after a student’s parents died to ensure they weren’t over-awarded aid.”

Mental health is another important issue for student advocates, and the [resolution passed by Student Government labels it a “crisis.”](https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/studentgovernment/files/2022/03/R.-205-006-Mental-Health.pdf) Despite a 2017 report reporting that half of HLS students suffer from anxiety or depression, [wait times for therapy at Harvard’s Counseling and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have reached six weeks.](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/3/1/camhs-appointments-wait-time/) The urgency of the resolution is heightened by the community’s own recent [loss of 2L student Tommy Raskin to suicide](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2021/1/18/tommy-raskin-obituary/) on December 31, 2020. Despite constant reassurance from the Administration that mental health is a top-tier priority, they’ve thus far been unable to secure even a single student meeting with the Director of CAMHS.

Informing students about these advocacy efforts is difficult, too, since administrators review and edit newsletters that Student Government sends to the student body. This [email review policy is also the subject of resolution](https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/studentgovernment/files/2022/03/R.-205-013-Email-Access.pdf). “I think it is completely inappropriate that the Dean of Students Office is editing emails from the Student Government to the Student Body on conversations – oftentimes adversarial – between DOS and SG,” Faith remarked.

Overseeing the journey of these twelve resolutions is one of the final acts Gabe and Faith will take as Student Body Co-Presidents, since their term ends April 4. When asked what she hoped the resolutions would accomplish, Gabe said, “I hope they show the world that all is not well at Harvard Law School – and that this pressure would finally create the incentives necessary for the Administration to invite change.”

**About the Harvard Law School Student Government**

Harvard Law School Student Government is proud to represent the student body of Harvard Law School. Student Government advocates to the HLS Administration on behalf of students, supports the many student organizations that thrive at HLS, and fosters community through student events. To learn more, [visit our website.](https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/studentgovernment/)