



**HARVARD LAW SCHOOL  
STUDENT BODY  
FALL TERM  
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FOUR**



**RESOLUTION NO. R.-208-001**

**A RESOLUTION ON POLITICAL ACTION, GROUP GATHERINGS AND THE NORMAL USE OF BELINDA HALL**

WHEREAS on March 23, 2023, in keeping with the longstanding name for the common space among students, the Harvard Law School Student Government officially designated the lounge between Wasserstein and Caspersen Centers as Belinda Hall, in honor of Belinda Sutton, a West African-born woman enslaved by the Royall family who petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for her fair wages;

WHEREAS Belinda Hall is the central common space and lounge at Harvard Law School;

WHEREAS normal use of Belinda Hall includes studying, socializing, and gathering in groups, small and large;

WHEREAS normal use of Belinda Hall includes student group events, affinity group meetups, class-related group discussions, student political action, and protest;

WHEREAS Belinda Hall is a critical meeting place for students of all affiliations to gather, discuss, and express that which is relevant to students within the Law School;

WHEREAS in 2013, the year after Belinda Hall was inaugurated, the Women's Law Association engaged and rallied students and faculty in the lounge to gather support for their "Shatter the Ceiling" gender diversity and justice campaign;

WHEREAS in 2016, students occupied a portion of Belinda Hall as part of their "Reclaim Harvard Law" campaign for racial justice, calling for the institution to reckon with its historic ties to slavery;

WHEREAS in 2017, students launched the Public Interest Scavenger Hunt in Belinda Hall, at which Dean Martha Minow spoke, and which continued annually until the pandemic disrupted in-person classes;

WHEREAS in 2017, students moved the annual DisOrientation event to Belinda Hall, bringing hundreds of students together to build community and critically discuss legal education and history;

WHEREAS since 2017, DisOrientation has taken place annually in Belinda Hall every year that students have attended in-person classes;

WHEREAS in 2021, students gathered in Belinda Hall to advocate for divestment of the Harvard endowment from fossil fuels;

WHEREAS in 2023 and 2024, students used Belinda Hall to organize and advocate for a ceasefire in Gaza and for disclosure and divestment of Harvard's endowment;

WHEREAS in February 2024, the American Bar Association published revised Standards for Approval of Law Schools requiring that all schools “[p]rotect the rights of faculty, students, and staff to communicate ideas that may be controversial or unpopular, including through robust debate, demonstrations, or protests;”

WHEREAS there are no weather-protected areas within Harvard Law School designated for, or historically used for, demonstrations and protests except for Belinda Hall;

WHEREAS in March 2024, Harvard Law School chapter presidents of the American Constitutional Society and the Federalist Society issued a joint statement, citing to Belinda Hall, that “any limitation on students' right to express themselves in the time, place, and manner of their choosing must clear an exceedingly high bar;”

WHEREAS in April 2024, over 40 Harvard Law School faculty and educators signed a statement protecting student speech against “unreasonably expansive and historically unfounded interpretations of protest guidelines;”

WHEREAS in August 2024, Harvard University issued new, University-wide policy guidelines stating that all events “require registration” and “requests to use space . . . must be submitted in advance for approval in accordance with content-neutral standards and relevant local rules and policies established by the School . . . with oversight responsibility for that space;”

WHEREAS the local rules of Harvard Law School govern the use of Belinda Hall and allow for its “normal use;”

WHEREAS the normal use of Belinda Hall is defined by the space's historical record and purpose;

WHEREAS Belinda Hall has continued to function and thrive as a vibrant, open, and non-reservable common space through a decade of normal use;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that large group gatherings are normal and long-established uses of Belinda Hall;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that student protests, demonstrations, and other political activity are normal and long-established uses of Belinda Hall;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that events or gatherings in Belinda Hall, where there is no expectation of exclusive use, need not require approval or reservations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Belinda Hall should be available to students, faculty, and staff of all affinity, identity, and political groups to gather at any time of day;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that should Harvard Law School require registration or approval for events in Belinda Hall in the future, that process should not create any barriers to free speech, dissent, protest, organizing; or other normal and long-standing uses of the space; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Harvard Law School Student Government calls on the Law School to safeguard the right to use Belinda Hall in accordance with the normal use of Belinda Hall described in this resolution.

**PASSED IN THE STUDENT COUNCIL: September 17, 2024**

**VOTE TOTALS:**

**6   YES**

**2   NO**

**0   ABSTAIN**