

July 11, 2019

To: Dr. Robbie Friedmann, Founding Director of GILEE, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University



From: Gary LaFree, Chair, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, the University of Maryland

Re: Support for international professional exchanges

Thanks for sharing the information about the law enforcement executive leadership development program ([GILEE](#)). I know that GILEE has been around for many years and that it is a recognized center at the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University. I am also aware that in recent years GILEE has come under attack by the BDS boycott movement against Israel. I do not know all the details but I know that in April of this year, the Georgia State University Student Government Association (SGA) Senate considered “A University-Wide Opinion Resolution” to encourage Georgia State University to withdraw its police department from GILEE, end GILEE’s presence at GSU, and redirect its funding to other police training activities. An SGA ad hoc committee reviewed the validity of the legislation and rendered the bill invalid (GILEE does not train the GSU police officers and does not receive funding from GSU). The bill was tabled by a vote of 17:2 with 7 abstentions.

I just want to put in a good word for the value added that GILEE brings to law enforcement and public safety. They have received strong support and praise from professional associations, world leaders, US police leaders, their graduates, state and local governments, academic institutions and community and civic organizations. They also have been praised in a number of legislative resolutions and have received several awards and honors, including the George Governor’s Public Safety Award.

More generally, academic boycotts are a dangerous precedent. Universities are critical as areas for the free and open exchange of ideas. Standing against boycotts is important not only for GILEE but also for any potential groups who are subject to political pressure not to participate in the open exchange of viewpoints and ideas. Encouraging the open exchange of ideas seems especially important in the current highly polarized political environment. Beyond this, there is clear value in providing police with leadership training and encouraging international professional exchanges. These activities are in fact not only an important goal in their own right but also likely enhance public safety.