

Professor Roberts, Reverend Howard and members of the committee, I am honored to be here today to participate in this important dialogue. My name is Michal Nina Saraf, and I am the Senior Clinical Director at CAPS, Counseling and Psychological Services. In this role, I am charged with overseeing and managing our internal operations where our diverse community of professionals strives to meet the mental health needs of our diverse student body. A deep and abiding commitment to social justice and multiculturally informed practice guides our decision making and interactions at every turn.

I have been privileged to build relationships with several members of Penn Public Safety and to interact more broadly with a wider group of departmental professionals. These relationships were born and have grown on campus committees, during late night huddles at the police station in the wake of a tragedy, during post-vention responses to students, during much needed and well executed wellness checks for student safety, and during too numerous to count, phone and (it used to be), in-person consultations. In the context of meetings I have found colleagues who are thoughtful, wise, sensitive to individual student need, creative in devising support plans and willing to go above and beyond to create safety nets for any given student. They exemplify, "it takes a village....". I have witnessed the same skills in the stressful moments before dawn after a tragedy and in the planning for holding students during a post-vention. We have held each other, and I have always witnessed sensitive people seeking to understand and respond to the range of human need and emotion in any given situation. I have partnered with officers working evening and night shifts as they thoughtfully check on students of concern. I have watched them display sensitivity to the student(s), be mindful of the power their role carries and often times guide highly troubled students towards a needed next step in a care plan.

At the same time that I have enjoyed these very positive relationships and interactions with our public safety personnel, I am mindful of how People of Color in our community may have different feelings about the police and feel retraumatized by the very presence of police officers in our midst. I am mindful of the difference between my experience walking the streets and that of some of my colleagues. I am mindful of the fear that grips many individuals and families. We are witnessing violence perpetrated by police departments against Black identified people in our country on a regular basis and receive daily reminders of how we have two justice systems – one for white people and one for Black people. I am eager to discover the best ways we as a campus community can learn to respond to these very present and legitimate concerns.

In summary, I am so grateful for and proud of the collegial relationships I enjoy here at Penn with our partners in Public Safety. Broadly defined, they are relationships replete with respect, open communication, eagerness to collaborate, and willingness to teach and learn. Of utmost importance to me, these people always share humor, compassion, and gentle vulnerability. However, we face a huge problem on a systemic level, and I am eager to participate in conversations that may lead to greater understanding on this front in the service of building true justice.