

Community Statement Concerning Cornell University October 15, 2026

We, leaders and stakeholders serving the Ithaca and Tompkins County communities, demand that the Cornell University Board of Trustees and senior Ithaca campus officials take immediate, transparent, and effective steps toward terminating the campus sexual assault culture that Cornell acknowledges has persisted for too long.

We share the outrage that has been expressed by New York Governor Kathy Hochul, Cornell students, Cornell faculty, Cornell alumni, Ithaca and Tompkins County community members, and Americans across the country over the handling of allegations that Jane Doe was gang raped at the Chi Phi fraternity house on the Cornell campus on October 19-20, 2024.

We support Governor Hochul's appointment of Attorney General Letitia James to conduct a new investigation of the allegations and the Governor's call for Cornell to appoint outside counsel to review how university officials handled Jane Doe's sexual assault report.

We speak out collectively because the persistence of sexual assault involving Cornellians impacts the wider Ithaca and Tompkins County communities. Our medical and emergency services, behavioral health providers, and sexual assault advocates are directly involved in supporting Cornell students who experience sexual assault or are affected by it in other ways. Members of our communities including our children are constantly alerted to incidents of sexual misconduct related to the Cornell campus.

We agree with Governor Hochul when she stated: "This culture has to stop. And in New York, we're going to do everything we can to stop it."

In Ithaca and Tompkins County, this now begins with Cornell immediately implementing robust, zero-tolerance policies and practices for preventing sexual violence, including: educating its students about sexual assault and its root causes; procedures ensuring effective Title IX and criminal investigations of assault allegations; and meaningful and timely penalties placed on perpetrators as well as Greek organizations and other entities responsible for tolerating sexual assault on their premises.

We call on Cornell to implement a system of accountability that transparently reviews and evaluates its reforms and regularly reports back to the campus, Ithaca, and Tompkins County communities on the results.

Robert Cantelmo
Mayor, City of Ithaca

Shawna Black
Chair, Tompkins County Legislature

Lea Webb
Senate Member for District 52
New York State Senate

Anna Kelles
Assembly Member for District 125
New York State Assembly

Josephine Gibson
Mental Health Association in Tompkins County

Tiffany Bloss
Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service of Tompkins County

Crystal Howser
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Greater Central New York

Sandra Sorensen
NAMI Finger Lakes

Jennifer Brownell
Advocacy Center of Tompkins County

MindWell Psychology LLP

Anke Wessels
Center for Transformative Action

Jan Lynch
Finger Lakes Independence Center

Meryl Phipps
Village at Ithaca

Olan E. Mack
The Learning Web, Inc.

Reverend Debbie Bennett Reynolds
First Baptist Church in Ithaca

The. Rev. Dr. Jason R. Churchill
St. Luke Lutheran Church and Lutheran Campus Ministry

Rev. Kirianne E. Weaver, for the Session
First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca

Tamie Pushlar
Parents Coalition to STOP Cornell Rape Culture

Andrew Pushlar
Parents Coalition to STOP Cornell Rape Culture

Julia Taylor
Civic Ensemble

Lesley Greene
Story House Ithaca

Jonathan Miller
Story House Ithaca

Jen Percy-Edwards
Story House Ithaca

Darrel Harrington
Be Kind Ithaca

Samantha Shoemaker
Free Hugs Ithaca

Scott MacLeod
The Sophie Fund