

July 23, 2020

To members of the Somerville City Council,

We, the undersigned residents of Somerville, request that the City Council hold a hearing to discuss the reopening plans of Tufts University. Tufts' plans to reopen its campus and resume classes is by far the most unrestricted of any institution in the area and demands a close look to ensure public health and safety. We appreciate that Tufts is challenged to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff. Yet there are several concerning issues that deserve transparency and would benefit from a public hearing, including:

1. Where and how often will students and staff be tested, and is this a requirement of returning to campus? If students or staff become sick and require quarantine, what facilities and services are established to meet their needs? Will faculty and staff remain employed if their recovery extends to months?
2. Likely, a certain percentage of students are already in Somerville and or will return before the beginning of their semester. How does Tufts ensure a requirement of testing before returning? How will Tufts regulate testing to a student community that is integrated into city neighborhoods?
3. Reopening an institution during two health crises is an issue of racial justice. As one example, SEIU32BJ reports that Tufts has laid off the majority of its contract janitorial workers. What is Tufts doing to ensure the health and safety of its *entire* community, not just its paying students? Has Tufts furloughed staff and what is the institution doing to ensure that former and existing staff have access to testing and care? Is Tufts working with the boards of health where their employees live?
4. Somerville's BIPOC residents have been disproportionately impacted by the virus. With long overdue discussion of the need to invest in our communities to ensure a just recovery and address structural racism, is Tufts willing to make the financial commitment we have always asked them for and pay their PILOT? Tufts needs to engage in direct discussions with community members to design the investments that will best serve residents hardest hit.

Covid-19 has exposed structural inequities that threaten the future of our city, yet Tufts has an endowment nearly \$2 billion, which has also experienced growth during the last ten years. As an anonymous writer in the Journal of Higher Ed recently wrote, "When they look back, those historians will not be asking how carefully institutional endowments were stewarded through these dark economic times. They will be asking, who did something. The endowment will mean nothing if the community around the college collapses."

As the City Council, you are tasked with working to ensure the public health of us, city residents. At this historic moment, the Somerville City Council should not only look carefully at Tufts' reopening plans, but also at how Tufts will work to address the underlying social determinants of health and how Tufts can help shape a better Somerville.

Signed,

Anna Leslie, Banks St.

Alex Cornacchini, Dickson St.

Theresa Haas, Warner Street

Victoria Antonino, Boston Street

Andrew Klatt, Liberty Ave.

Jim Kaplan, Liberty Avenue

Alex Pirie, St. James Ave.

Donald Cronin, Summer St

Kate White, Rogers Ave.

Alissa Ebel, Rogers Ave.

Bethany Shenise, Willow Ave

Fred Berman, Cherry St.

Alison Pirie, St. James Ave.

Monica Achen, Prichard Ave.

Jaya Aiyer, Lowden Ave.

Jules Williams, Banks St.

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