



Executive Action Sheet for Senate Legislation

Senate Bill 330-

Resolution 330-

I, John Cho, President of the Student Assembly of William & Mary do hereby:

Approve

Veto

The Student Assembly Senate Legislation:

President, 330th Student Assembly (22-23)

DATE:

r330th Student Assembly
Senate Bill 330-010

A Bill

To expand upon SB 329-013 and Initiate the William & Mary, Let's Talk Initiative (WMLT)

The William & Mary, Let's Talk Act

An Act of the 330th Student Assembly of William & Mary,

Sponsored by Senator Eugene Lee' 23

Supported by Secretary of Outreach Abby Varricchio

WHEREAS, recent confusion among the student body regarding expression & posting policies indicates a need for increased public awareness and understanding of expression-related policies,¹

WHEREAS, Yik Yak and other anonymous social media apps have been harmful to campus discourse,

WHEREAS, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) awarded William & Mary a "green light" rating for its policies regarding student expression,²

WHEREAS, policies can only be effective toward their goals if they are understood by students,

WHEREAS, students across the nation and at William & Mary struggle with issues surrounding freedom of expression,³

WHEREAS, a culture supportive of free expression enables students to organize and powerfully and publicly advocate for causes they are passionate about,

WHEREAS, Student Assembly has a duty to educate students of their rights to free expression on campus,

WHEREAS, Student Assembly has worked on educating students of their rights on campus through various means such as the Student Rights Initiative,

WHEREAS, the need for student-lead voices, in addition to the Democracy Initiative, is vital in order to cultivate a campus culture supportive of democracy and expressive freedom,

¹ <https://flathatnews.com/2020/10/26/tribe-for-life-chalkboard-comments-stir-campus-discourse/>

² <https://www.thefire.org/schools/the-college-of-william-and-mary/>

³ <https://reports.collegepulse.com/college-free-speech-rankings-2021>

WHEREAS, to live as a true, respectful community of students and scholars, it is necessary to learn how to co-exist and tolerate disagreement,

WHEREAS, we have a duty as students to cultivate a campus where we feel comfortable learning from one another as peers through discussion,

WHEREAS, *The Counterspeech Working Group Act* (Senate Bill 329-013), articulates a need to better educate students on their First Amendment rights on campus,

WHEREAS, while hate speech may not have a legal definition, it is incumbent upon the Student Assembly to best assist and equip those – particularly marginalized groups at William & Mary – with the proper resources and knowledge to best counter speech they may deem as hateful;

WHEREAS, in reiteration of *SB 329-013: The Counterspeech Working Group Act*, the Supreme Court has best articulated that to counter the effects of hate speech, “the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence” (i.e. the “counterspeech doctrine.”);

WHEREAS, “Democracy” is one of four initiatives listed in the university’s strategic plan, Vision 2026; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that initiatives started in *SB 329-013: The Counterspeech Working Group Act* be further expanded to support marginalized groups & voices on campus and sustained through the restructuring of the group;

Now, therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Student Assembly of William & Mary:

1. Pursuant to **Section IV, subsection VI** of the Constitution of the Student Assembly, restructures the Counter Speech Working Group Act to the “William & Mary, Let’s Talk Initiative” to:
 - a. Educate the university community on university policy and state law regarding freedom of expression on campus
 - i. Education will center on the role of the First Amendment and the university regarding expression as well as student rights to expression on campus.
 - b. Draft a statement on a campus commitment to free expression to public peer institutions
 - c. Promote civil and healthy discourse on campus through creating an awareness campaign & hosting an event(s)
 - i. Events will be facilitated dialogues about issues affecting the campus community or that are of interest to the campus community. Model

facilitation guides can be found [here](#). For example, the first event ought to be about the state of discourse and discussion on campus (i.e., how students perceive discussion on campus, etc.)

2. The William & Mary, Let's Talk Initiative shall be composed of:
 - a. At least one Student Assembly undergraduate and graduate representative
 - b. At least one representative from the following executive branch departments and initiatives:
 - i. College Policy and Student Rights
 - ii. Outreach
 - iii. Student Life
 - iv. Student Rights Initiative
 - c. Students outside of Student Assembly not affiliated with student affinity groups via an interest form submitted to the committee.
 - d. Charges the members of the committee to reach out to student affinity groups on campus, particularly those affinity groups involved in the previous working group.
3. *Charges the sponsors of the committee to reach out to additional student affinity groups to be included in the committee.*
4. The William & Mary Let's Talk Initiative will educate students with information from the following sources:
 - a. The Office of Compliance & Equity, William & Mary
 - b. The Foundation for Individual Rights & Expression (FIRE)
 - c. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
5. The William & Mary Let's Talk Initiative will:
 - a. Present a report of progress to the Student Assembly Senate at the end of each semester which is to be distributed by the Chair of the Senate.
 - b. The report will be submitted by either:
 - i. The undergraduate or graduate Student Assembly representative on the committee or
 - ii. One of the department representatives listed above in Section 2; subsection b.