

December 18, 2020

The UB Gender Institute's Statement in Solidarity with Dr. Gale Burstein

The University at Buffalo's Gender Institute condemns the misogynist and antisemitic attacks on our UB colleague Dr. Gale Burstein, a former member of our Executive Committee, who has worked tirelessly during this pandemic as Erie County's health commissioner. She has ensured that every county resident has access to free Covid-19 diagnostic testing and with the same care and commitment, she will oversee the distribution of the vaccine. It is appalling that she has become the target of hate speech, including anonymous threats that jeopardize her and her family's safety. We applaud County Executive Mark Poloncarz for condemning these vile incidents, including those focused on him, in the context of rising antisemitic actions nationally.

The targeting of Dr. Burstein must also be seen as an attack on her gender and authority. Misogynist actions continue to escalate nationally, reflecting another long-standing public health crisis. Over twenty public health officials—the vast majority of whom are women— have resigned from high profile positions across the nation, including Dr. Amy Acton in Ohio who was subjected to a barrage of misogynist and antisemitic threats, as well as gun-toting protestors outside her home. In a similar vein, Joyce Warshaw, Mayor of Dodge City, Kansas, stepped down this week because she no longer felt safe.

Women in leadership positions across the country are being systematically intimidated and, in many cases, threatened with violence. Women have a fundamental right to freedom from fear and for this reason the UB Gender Institute stands with both Dr. Burstein and all women who are targeted by misogynist violence.