



October 21, 2025

Todd Saliman  
Office of the President  
University of Colorado Boulder  
1800 Grant Street, Suite 800  
Denver, Colorado 80203

**URGENT**

*Sent via Overnight and Electronic Mail (officeofthepresident@cu.edu)*

Dear President Saliman:

FIRE's Student Press Freedom Initiative<sup>1</sup> is concerned by the University of Colorado Boulder's suspension of student journalist Ašiihkionkonci Parker for covering an on-campus protest. UC Boulder has characterized Parker's newsgathering efforts as violations of university policy, setting a dangerous precedent that harms the public's right to know and defies UC Boulder's obligations to protect students' expressive and press rights under the First Amendment. We urge you to end Parker's suspension and stop pursuing institutional punishment against them<sup>2</sup> and other student journalists engaged in legitimate newsgathering activities.

Parker is a photographer and videographer for *El Diario de la Gente*, an independent newspaper led by former and current CU students.<sup>3</sup> On October 16, 2025, Parker attended a university career fair and covered a protest by Students for Justine in Palestine (SJP) in which approximately 10 protesters linked arms, formed a circle in front of the Lockheed Martin booth, and chanted.<sup>4</sup> Parker took videos and photos from outside the circle.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As you may recall from our recent correspondence, FIRE is a nonpartisan nonprofit that defends freedom of speech. For more than 25 years, FIRE has defended freedom of expression and other individual rights on America's university campuses. You can learn more about our mission and activities at [thefire.org](https://thefire.org). FIRE's Student Press Freedom Initiative (SPFI) defends free press on campus by advocating for the rights of student journalists at colleges and universities across the country.

<sup>2</sup> Ašiihkionkonci Parker uses they/them pronouns. This letter refers to Parker accordingly.

<sup>3</sup> *About*, EL DIARIO DE LA GENTE, <https://eldiariodelagente.com/about/> (last visited Oct. 20, 2025). The recitation here reflects our understanding of the pertinent facts based on the facts. We appreciate that you may have additional information and invite you to share it with us. To these ends, please find enclosed an executed privacy waiver authorizing you to share information about this matter.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Christopher Paddock, Associate Director, to Ašiihkionkonci Parker, student (Oct. 17, 2025) (on file with author).

<sup>5</sup> Copy of videos and photos on file with author.

Although protesters were asked to provide student IDs and leave, Parker asserts that no university administrator or officer asked Parker specifically to do so. Parker’s photos and videos show UC Boulder police officers and officials permitting Parker to continue filming as protesters chanted and as Parker later exited the career fair.<sup>6</sup>

The following day, Parker received a letter from Associate Director of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Christopher Paddock informing them they were suspended for violating multiple policies in relation to the SJP protest.<sup>7</sup> This suspension excludes Parker from the entire campus, including classes, any CU Boulder activities, and all on campus housing.<sup>8</sup> Paddock scheduled a resolution hearing with Parker for tomorrow, Wednesday, October 22.<sup>9</sup>

As a public university bound by the First Amendment,<sup>10</sup> CU Boulder may not chill student journalism by suspending a student reporter for gathering news on campus. The press’s right to gather information is long-established.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the press, including the student press, serves as an important conduit for the public’s right to know about events, including protests, on America’s college campuses. Courts have recognized that the news media, whether on or off campus, act as “surrogates for the public” in keeping a watchful eye on their communities.<sup>12</sup>

While courts have held the right to record police on private property is subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions,<sup>13</sup> Parker, a CU Boulder student, had the right to be in the space where the career fair was being held, and the right to cover a student protest and the actions of law enforcement and university officials. Parker did not disrupt the career fair by protesting. They merely documented the protesters and the reactions of officials and attendees. Suspending a student journalist—whose presence served to document an event of public interest and did not appear to violate any college policy or particularized directive from law enforcement—cannot be construed as a reasonable time, place and manner restriction. CU Boulder has no legitimate interest in punishing a student journalist who did not interfere with university operations, did not fail to comply with official orders, and did

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Paddock to Parker, *supra* note 4. Paddock alleged that Parker violated the university’s Student Code of Conduct by failing to comply with university officials’ orders, interfering with CU Boulder activity, violating CU Boulder policies and regulations, and violating the Campus Use of CU Boulder Facilities policy.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Healy v. James*, 408 U.S. 169, 180 (1972) (“[T]he precedents of this Court leave no room for the view that, because of the acknowledged need for order, First Amendment protections should apply with less force on college campuses than in the community at large. Quite to the contrary, ‘the vigilant protection of constitutional freedoms is nowhere more vital than in the community of American schools.’”) (internal citation omitted).

<sup>11</sup> *See Branzburg v. Hayes*, 408 U.S. 665, 681 (1972).

<sup>12</sup> *Richmond Newspapers v. Virginia*, 448 U.S. 555, 573 (1980).

<sup>13</sup> *See, e.g., Mills v. PPE Casino Resorts Md., LLC*, 2017 WL 1862474, at \*6 (D. Md. May 8, 2017) (right to record law enforcement recognized in a private casino); *Freeman v. Spoljaric*, 667 F. Supp. 3d 636 (S.D. Ohio 2023) (right to record law enforcement recognized on plaintiff’s private property).

not violate campus policies. Therefore, by suspending Parker for their legitimate newsgathering activities, CU Boulder contravenes its First Amendment obligation.

CU Boulder's decision to censor the student press has implications that go far beyond the newsroom and the campus. CU Boulder's actions set a precedent that would deprive the entire campus community and members of the public of crucial news related to campus, and they send a signal to its students that journalists do their work only at the sufferance of those in power. As major events continue to unfold on campuses across the country and, indeed, the world, the press, on campus and off, must remain free to gather and disseminate the news. CU Boulder must defend the student press—not punish it. To that end, CU Boulder must immediately end Parker's suspension and forgo further attempts to discipline them or other student journalists engaged in legitimate newsgathering.

Given the urgent nature of this matter, we request a substantive response to this letter no later than close of business Thursday, October 23.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie McMullan".

Marie McMullan  
Student Press Legal Associate

Cc: Christopher Paddock, Associate Director of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution  
Katherine Aidala, Senior Associate Counsel

Encl.