



## USC Thornton School of Music Student Council Statement in Support of Valedictorian Asna Tabassum

April 23, 2024

Last week the Thornton Student Council voted unanimously in favor of supporting Valedictorian Asna Tabassum and her right to speak at the 141st USC University-Wide Commencement Ceremony, to be held on May 10, 2024.

The administration's decision to cancel the valedictorian's commencement speech based on threats against her and her political views is antithetical to USC's mission statement: "USC is pluralistic, welcoming outstanding men and women of every race, creed and background. We are a global institution in a global center, attracting more international students over the years than any other American university. And we are private, unfettered by political control, strongly committed to academic freedom... An extraordinary closeness and willingness to help one another are evident among USC students, alumni, faculty, and staff; indeed, for those within its compass the Trojan Family is a genuinely supportive community."

By silencing Asna, the USC administration is showing a complete disregard for the rights of students, faculty and staff to speak freely, ask difficult questions, and engage in true scholarly research. In the name of academic freedom, diversity, equity, and inclusion, we demand that the administration reverse its decision, and let Asna deliver her rightfully earned commencement address. Failure to do so would set a dangerous precedent for future generations and damage the honorable reputation of the university.

Sincerely,

The 2023–2024 Thornton Student Council