



**State of North Carolina  
General Court of Justice  
Eighteen Prosecutorial District**

**JEFFREY L. NIEMAN  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

**144 EAST MARGARET LANE  
HILLSBOROUGH, NC 27278  
Ph: (919) 644-4600  
Fax: (919) 644-4610**

**Chatham County Office  
PO Box 652  
Pittsboro, NC 27312  
(919) 545-3510**

**To: All Media Outlets**

**From: Jeff Nieman, District Attorney, Chatham and Orange Counties**

**Date: May 1, 2024**

**Re: Response to Town Council Members Statement Regarding  
Prosecution of UNC Protest-Related Cases**

It has come to my attention that some members of the Chapel Hill and Carrboro Town Councils, who I hold in very high regard, chose to weigh in on my office's prosecutorial decisions regarding matters charged only two days ago. I have stated publicly, and privately to some of these same officials, that if we determine that crimes have been committed and properly enforced, we would proceed with the cases that meet that standard. I can understand why some public officials may feel compelled to speak out on matters of public interest. However, a prosecutorial decision should never be made prior to collection and thorough review of all the relevant evidence. That evidence is still being compiled; therefore, it's impossible for anyone to make a reasoned determination as to how best to proceed in these matters.

The Rules of Professional Conduct severely limit how much a prosecutor can comment on a pending case. However, I will offer the following. At the latest count, 36 individuals have been charged with at least one criminal offense ranging from 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Trespass to Assault on a Government Official. Every single one of these defendants is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court. Each of them has a right to an attorney and can have an attorney appointed for them by the court, if they qualify.

Once we have received and reviewed all the evidence in these cases, then and only then will we make decisions regarding their prosecution. Our office remains committed to our core responsibility of public safety. Peaceful and lawful protesters, as well as law enforcement officials carrying out their duties, have the right to these activities free from violence. I made a promise to fairly and impartially administer the criminal laws of this State free from bias, prejudice or any type of outside influence, and I pledge to do just that with these cases.