

Legislation Text

File #: 161119, **Version:** 0

Upholding the City of Philadelphia's support for and protection of Muslim communities, condemning violence and hate speech targeted towards Muslims, affirming the religious pluralism of the United States, and urging Philadelphia residents to stand in solidarity with our American Muslim communities - and all other communities - for peace and justice.

WHEREAS, American Muslims are a central part of the history of our City and nation, whose faith and dedication to American ideals have contributed to the social, economic, cultural and political success of the United States and the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Our nation's founding documents emphasize the freedom of religion and establish a society that embraces religious pluralism; Philadelphia, as the birthplace of our nation and the City within which these founding beliefs were conceived, has a unique responsibility to uphold those beliefs as a model for the entire nation; and

WHEREAS, The Muslim community of Philadelphia, both native born and immigrant, has grown substantially and is among the American metropolitan areas with the highest proportion of Muslim residents, estimated to be in the range of 200,000; and

WHEREAS, The history of Islam in the United States began even before the country's founding, when African Muslims were enslaved and brought to the Americas; in the years since they have helped in numerous ways to build this country, including sacrificing their lives in every major war from the Revolutionary War onwards; and

WHEREAS, Despite these manifold contributions, American Muslims have long faced exclusion and suspicion, and following 9/11 have been subjected to a severe backlash in the form of hate crimes and employment discrimination toward Arab and American Muslims and those perceived as Muslims; and

WHEREAS, Government-sanctioned surveillance practices by law enforcement have frequently targeted Muslims, Arabs, and those perceived to be Muslim in places of worship, neighborhoods, restaurants, and even schools, despite this repeatedly having been found by courts to be discriminatory and abusive; and

WHEREAS, We are saddened and outraged at the recent escalation of hateful rhetoric against Muslims, those perceived to be Muslims, immigrants, and all people of color; we are particularly concerned to see a number of political figures and elected government officials leading this escalation and using it in order to gain power, including by proposing a registry for Muslim immigrants and American Muslims, and we condemn these actions; and

WHEREAS, In the midst of this incendiary climate of fear and distrust, physical assaults, intimidation crimes, and murders in 2015 against Muslims and those perceived as Muslim have risen 67% from the previous year, reaching similar levels to after the 9/11 tragedy; following the recent presidential election there have been a disproportionate amount of anti-Muslim incidents of hateful harassment and intimidation, many of which have

been directly and explicitly tied to the election result, as documented by the Southern Poverty Law Center; and

WHEREAS, Here in Philadelphia, we have faced anti-Muslim advertisements posted in public buses, an attempt to intimidate a mosque community, and Islamophobic imagery directed at the City's mayor; in Harrisburg a local Islamic Society recently received a hate-filled letter praising President-Elect Trump and threatening the use of Nazi-era policies against Muslims; and

WHEREAS, In the face of extreme bigotry and violence, American Muslim communities and their leaders are using the language and teachings of Islam to promote peace and justice and service, and continuing to make innumerable contributions to the cultural and economic fabric and well-being of American society; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia finds anti-Muslim, Islamophobic rhetoric and hate-driven violence to be against American principles of religious freedom and fairness and contrary to the vision we hold as a nation that welcomes all people; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia's Fair Practices Ordinance clearly establishes wide-ranging legal protections against discrimination based on race, national origin, religion, as well as a host of other classifications in order to ensure the equal treatment of all Philadelphia residents, workers, and visitors; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia recognizes that hate crimes and acts of intimidation have also been directed towards Jewish people, LGBT people, African-American people, immigrants, women, and disabled people and are occurring at higher rates following the recent election, making it all the more crucial that we stand united in denunciation of hate and discrimination; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia continues to work toward a more inclusive society and welcomes cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and therefore believes that there is no better time than now to show support for the Muslim and Arab people of our nation and to condemn all forms of hateful rhetoric and actions directed against them or any other group; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia wishes to extend the traditional Islamic greeting of *As Salam Alaikum* (peace be upon you) to all of its Muslim residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS We, as elected representatives of the people, have a special responsibility not to stay silent in the face of hate, discrimination, and violence against any of our constituents or countrymen; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby:

- (1) Condemns violence and hate speech, affirms the religious pluralism of the United States, and expresses solidarity with Muslims and all those targeted for their ethnicity, race or religion;
- (2) Categorically rejects political tactics that use fear to manipulate voters or to gain power or influence;
- (3) Commits to pursuing a policy agenda that affirms civil and human rights, and ensures that those targeted on the basis of race, religion or immigration status can turn to government without fear of recrimination; and
- (4) Reaffirms the value of a pluralistic society, the beauty of a culture composed of multiple cultures, and the inalienable right of every person to live and practice their faith without fear.

