Legislation Text

File #: 190238, **Version:** 0

Condemning Pennsylvania State Representative Stephanie Borowicz's religious invocation on the day of the swearing-in of the first Muslim woman to ever serve in the General Assembly as Islamophobic and inappropriate.

WHEREAS, On March 25, 2019, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives celebrated a historic milestone during their legislative session, with the swearing-in of Movita Johnson-Harrell, the first Muslim woman ever elected to serve on the General Assembly. Representative Johnson-Harrell won a special election on March 12, 2019 for Pennsylvania's 190th District seat; and

WHEREAS, Fifty-five guests attended the session with Representative Johnson-Harrell, for what was supposed to be a joyous occasion. Thirty-two of those guests were Muslim; and

WHEREAS, Stephanie Borowicz, a Republican freshman representing Clinton County, was selected to offer a prayer during the legislative session on March 25, 2019. However, instead of acting with decency, Representative Borowicz's invocation was needlessly laden with political and Christian imagery; and

WHEREAS, Representative Borowicz said "Jesus" 13 times, "God" six times, and "Lord" four times, as well as expressing thanks to God that President Donald Trump "stands besides Israel" in her nearly two-minute prayer; and

WHEREAS, By saying that Jesus is "our only hope" and by willing "every knee" to bow to a Christian god, Representative Borowicz delivered a message that excluded not only Muslims, but all other non-Christian members of the audience; and

WHEREAS, Representative Borowicz refused to offer an apology for the prayer, which marred the historic event, and offended many; and

WHEREAS, Several members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives immediately criticized Representative Borowicz's prayer for its mean spiritedness and offensive nature. House Speaker Mike Turzai called for Pennsylvania lawmakers to deliver interfaith prayers that are respectful of all religious beliefs; and

WHEREAS, The goal of prayer is to unite; not to divide. The exclusionary nature and decisiveness of Representative Borowicz's invocation reflects an unacceptable attitude toward religious tolerance that should not be overlooked; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby condemns Pennsylvania State Representative Stephanie Borowicz's religious invocation on the day of the swearing-in of the first Muslim woman to ever serve in the General Assembly as Islamophobic and inappropriate.