

June 8, 2017

Mayor Neil M. O'Leary
City Hall Building
235 Grand Street, 2nd floor
Waterbury, CT 06702
noleary@waterburyct.org

Dear Mayor O'Leary,

We write to ask you to join us in publicly embracing our nation's core values of pluralism, diversity, and liberty for all while firmly rejecting the forces of hate and bigotry that seek to divide us.

As you may be aware, ACT for America, the nation's largest anti-Muslim hate group, has called for a protest in Waterbury as part of a coordinated series of [protests in over 20 cities across the nation](#) on June 10th. Timed during the Islamic month of Ramadan when Muslims around the world fast during the daylight hours, these protests have been disingenuously branded "March Against Sharia" and explicitly target Muslims at a time when hatred and bigotry has swept the nation.

ACT's founder, Brigitte Gabriel, regularly vilifies Muslims, claiming that practicing Muslims cannot be loyal to the United States. She also once said that "every practicing Muslim is a radical Muslim" and that Muslims are a "natural threat to civilized people of the world, particularly Western society." Both she and ACT have had a long history of promoting policies at the federal and state levels intended to manufacture fear of Muslims, and the group has been named a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

We are deeply concerned about the type of message that these protests send to the American public and to the good people in your city--that it is acceptable to vilify people simply because of their faith.

Between 2014 and 2015, FBI data indicates that hate crimes against Muslims increased by 67%. Bias-motivated violence continues to target Muslims, Arabs, South Asians, and a number of other communities. Just this year alone there have been numerous murders of individuals who are Muslim or were targeted based on anti-Muslim bigotry, regardless of their religion. In addition, several mosques around the country have been targeted by arson. Negative misperceptions of Muslims have also resulted in children being the target of bullying and harassment across the country--one poll conducted by the Institute for

Social Policy and Understanding suggests that more than forty percent of Muslim children in grades K-12 are bullied because of their faith.

Now, more than ever, we must come together and support one another from viewpoints and groups that seek to divide us.

We, the undersigned national and local civil rights, faith-based, and community organizations, ask that you use your voice as an elected representative of your city to reject bigotry. We urge you to issue an official statement to reiterate to the people of your city that every person is welcome and has the right to feel secure regardless of how they worship, where they're from, or who they love. Furthermore, we ask that you recognize that American Muslims have been an essential part of America's fabric since before our nation was founded. The members of your community, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, must be reassured that bigotry, hatred, and prejudice against any individual or group based on their faith, gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexual orientation, or disability status will not be tolerated.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that we can work closely with you in the future to positively engage all communities.

Please contact Madihha Ahussain at madihha@muslimadvocates.org (Muslim Advocates), Lindsay Schubiner at lindsay@newcomm.org (Center for New Community), and Ilhan Cagri at ilhan@mpac.org (Muslim Public Affairs Council) with any questions or to discuss this further.

Thank you in advance for your partnership and principled leadership.

Sincerely,

#GetOrganizedBrooklyn

18MR.org

A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice, Lutheran School of

Theology at Chicago

Advocates for Youth

American Friends Service Committee

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Amnesty International USA

Anti-Defamation League

Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)
Auburn Theological Seminary
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
CAIR-MN
California Immigrant Policy Center
Center for New Community
Church World Service
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Colorado Muslim Speakers Bureau
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
CREDO
Dominican Sisters of Houston
El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos
Emgage
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
Faith in Public Life
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
GSA Network
Harvard Islamic Society
Hispanic Federation
Hollaback Bosnia and Herzegovina
Hollaback!
Hollaback! Detroit
Hollaback! Seattle
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters - JPIC - USA
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Interfaith Worker Justice
International Refugee Assistance Project at the Urban Justice Center
Islamic Networks Group (ING)
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
Islamic Speakers Bureau of Arizona
Jewish Community Relations Council
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Voice for Peace - Chicago
Jewish Voice for Peace - Denver
Jewish Voice for Peace - New Haven

Jewish Voice for Peace - Northern New Jersey
Jewish Voice for Peace - Triangle, NC
Michigan Muslim Community Council
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Alliance of Indiana
Muslim Community Network
Muslim Justice League
Muslim Public Affairs Council
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Disaster Interfaiths Network
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Immigration Law Center
National Iranian American Council
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
OneAmerica
Physicians for Policy Action
Poligon Education Fund
PRC
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office of Public Witness
Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Shoulder to Shoulder
SIREN
South Asian Americans Leading Together
Southern Poverty Law Center
Syracuse Cultural Workers
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Revolutionary Love Project
The Sikh Coalition
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Together We Rise CT
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice

Unitarian Universalist Mass Action Network
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
UURISE - Unitarian Universalist Refugee & Immigrant Services & Education
Veterans for American Ideals
We Belong Together
Welcoming Gainesville and Alachua County
Women In Islam Inc
Women's March Michigan
Workers' Center of Central New York