



October 20, 2023

Dear Chairperson McClellan, Vice-Chairperson Escárega, members of the State Board of Education, and Commissioner Córdova,

The Colorado Muslim Leadership Council is a coalition of organizations serving more than 100,000 Muslim Americans residing in Colorado. On behalf of the Council, we are deeply concerned about the unfolding crisis in Palestine and Israel and how it is affecting local students in Colorado. In recent days, we've witnessed a steep rise in anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, and anti-Palestinian bias against students. We are particularly concerned about the lack of support for the body of Muslim students and their socio-emotional wellbeing.

Muslim families have inundated their local mosques, religious organizations, community leaders and educators with questions; sharing their students' heightened socio-emotional distress regarding daily discussions and events revolving around the recent violence in Gaza and its surrounding areas. Specific school-sponsored activities that are one-sided in support of Israel have encouraged students to stand in support for the victims of Israel with blatant and total disregard of Palestinian/Arab/Muslim student grief and extreme bias towards Israeli lives. In other examples, Muslim students have been harrassed and vilified, asked to take positions on the subject, grown uncomfortable with subjective direct instruction in classrooms around the subject, and been called upon to represent all Muslims without regard for their age and increasingly fragile state. Left unchecked, the implications against Muslim and Arab students could be quite detrimental and unsafe.

Muslim community leaders and students raised this concern at Cherry Creek School District where an emergency meeting was organized by the Cherry Creek School District Muslim Engagement Group. Superintendent Chris Smith, along with administrators and legal council directly heard from Muslim students regarding the concerning rise in hate crimes targeting our youth. We are appreciative of the district-wide letter Superintendent Smith sent to the families of the Cherry Creek District apologizing to all impacted families and affirming his commitment to provide a welcoming environment to students with available resources. This is where the healing begins and is the real result of those empathetic conversations that were held. Our aim is that all schools follow the lead of CCSD in having these conversations.

All schools within Colorado districts must ensure that the safety and wellbeing of EVERY student is at the forefront of all actions and decisions. To this end, we request the following action items:

1. Administrators' and educators' one-sided statements on the conflict in Palestine and Israel lead to bullying and harassment, violating the mandate for equal treatment of all students under ESSA and related educational laws. We call on all school districts to issue public statements to their respective district reaffirming the school's unwavering commitment to fostering an environment that upholds values of equality, fairness, and respect for students of all backgrounds and lived experiences.
2. As federally supported entities, schools should be non-political environments where students come to learn. We request an immediate pause in all school-sponsored activities that have the potential to isolate Muslim students and increase tensions among our K-12 student populations. Teachers and school staff must be empathetic to all students, and we request that school districts maintain transparency with our community with regards to the numbers of threats that are directed toward Arab and Muslim students.
3. Encourage superintendents of each district in Colorado to meet directly with Muslim community leaders to hear parent, student, and additional stakeholder voices.
4. Ensure a safe school environment where students can use Safe2Tell phone numbers if they feel that they are threatened or their safety is jeopardized. We ask that you share Safe2Tell information with students along with state mental health resources.
5. Out of complete fairness, do not ask grieving Muslim and Arab students to teach others about Islam or the complex political climate of the Middle East.
6. Districts should ensure that administrators, staff, and faculty actively learn about the local Muslim community in order to reduce the risk of reinforcing harmful stereotypes. This could be achieved via professional development in cultural competency training, engaging with community mosques and schools, and fostering discussions with school MSAs (Muslim Student Associations). In the event there is not an MSA in the school, we recommend reaching out to [Home - Islamic Networks Group \(ING\)](#), a local, statewide organization for youth, Muslim Youth for Positive Impact at: [contact@mypi.org](mailto:contact@mypi.org), or the statewide coalition of Muslim Student Associations at: [coloradojointmsa@gmail.com](mailto:coloradojointmsa@gmail.com).

We encourage members of the Colorado Department of Education and Colorado school districts to collaborate with our advocacy coalition around the safety and mental wellness of ALL of our students. We appreciate your prompt response to this letter in regards to what steps you will be

taking directly as an administration, and how we can support any education or information you plan to share with communities.

Respectfully,

Burmese Islamic Association of Colorado - Masjid Al-Ansar  
Colorado Imam Council  
Colorado Joint Muslim Student Associations (MSA)  
Colorado Muslim Society - Masjid Abu Bakr  
Colorado Muslim Speaker's Bureau  
Colorado Muslim Connection  
Colorado Oromo Muslim Community Center - Masjid Bilal  
Denver Islamic Society - Masjid Al Nur  
Downtown Denver Islamic Center – Masjid Al-Shuhadaa  
Highlands Ranch Islamic Association - Masjid Syedna Hasan  
Islamic Center of Aurora Colorado - Masjid ArRahmah  
Islamic Center of Boulder  
Islamic Center of Fort Collins  
Islamic Center of Greeley  
Islamic Circle of North America – Colorado  
Metropolitan Denver North Islamic Center - Masjid Ikhlas  
Multicultural Mosaic Foundation  
Mile High Islamic Center  
Muslim American Society – Colorado  
Muslim Family Services of Colorado  
Muslim Youth for Positive Impact  
Northeast Denver Islamic Center - Masjid Taqwa  
Rocky Mountain Islamic Center  
Southeast Aurora Islamic Center  
The Islamic Society of Colorado Springs

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