

Eisha Khan
Biddeford
LD 724

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members on the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Eisha Khan I am from Biddeford. I am here to testify in support of LD 724

Supporting this bill, which proposes recognizing Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha as state holidays, is not just about marking these days on a calendar. It's a major step towards fostering a culture of dignity, respect, and equality for all Mainers—a change that has the power to shift our societal culture fundamentally.

Throughout my life, the significance of Eid has often been overshadowed by unavoidable scheduling conflicts. I cannot count the number of times school dances, work meetings, and social events have been scheduled on Eid days—days when I should be celebrating the joys of my religion with my community without the worry of conflicting commitments. It is unheard of for major events to be scheduled on Christmas or Easter in Maine. It is easy to take for granted that the legislature would not hold a hearing on Christmas or the school department to host prom on Easter. Yet, for those of us in the Muslim community, it is all too common to face the uncomfortable decision of choosing between our religious observances and our social or professional obligations.

As Maine's demographics evolve and our Muslim population grows, it is crucial that we extend the same privileges afforded to other communities to our Muslim neighbors. Recognizing Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha as state holidays would send a powerful message that Maine values the presence and contributions of its Muslim residents. It would also provide tangible support, allowing Muslims to fully participate in their religious celebrations without penalty or inconvenience.

This legislation is also a commitment to religious freedom, ensuring that all Mainers feel safe and supported in practicing their faith. By passing LD 724, Maine can lead by example in promoting an inclusive environment where every individual feels they belong and can thrive.

Thank you for considering my perspective as a Muslim American woman who dreams of a more inclusive, respectful, and equitable Maine. I urge you to support LD 724 and make this dream a reality for all who call Maine home.

I thank you for your time and happy to answer any questions.