

Dear respected members of the Maine State Legislature, State & Local Government Committee, and Chairs Rep. Suzanne Salisbury and Sen. Joseph Baldacci,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill LD724, which seeks to recognize Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha as state holidays in Maine. As our state's population continues to grow and diversify, it is crucial that we acknowledge and honor the various cultural and religious celebrations that enrich our communities. This initiative is particularly important for Maine's growing Muslim population, which, according to the Pew Research Center, has increased by over 50% in the past decade, making up around 1.6% of Maine's total population as of 2020. This demographic shift emphasizes the need for inclusive recognition of cultural practices.

Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha are significant religious observances for Muslims worldwide, marking the end of Ramadan and the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice for God, respectively. For those who celebrate, these holidays are times of reflection, community, and wholesome joy. By officially recognizing these days in our state calendar, we affirm the value of cultural inclusivity, allowing Muslim families and individuals to participate fully in these important festivities without facing the burden of work obligations, or fear of retribution for taking a leave of absence on those days.

Opponents of this bill may argue that recognizing Eid as official holidays may disrupt business operations. However, it is essential to consider that these holidays are fortified as floating holidays, much like other recognized state and federal holidays. In 2022, for example, the Maine Department of Labor reported that approximately 25% of businesses already observe floating holidays to accommodate cultural and personal observances. Many members of the Muslim community are open to working on other holidays, fostering a spirit of cooperation and understanding within our workplaces; increasing workplace cohesion as Muslim staff in different institutions communicate with their employers to navigate a system that works best for both parties on these two important days.

Furthermore, some may raise concerns about the overall recognition of religious holidays in Maine. Currently, the state recognizes several federal holidays derived from diverse cultural traditions, including Thanksgiving and Christmas. By recognizing Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha, we align with neighboring states like Massachusetts and New York, which have taken steps towards

acknowledging these important observances. This formal recognition enhances our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.

Statistically, recognizing Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha will benefit students and staff within our school systems. A study by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding found that over 70% of Muslim students reported feeling more included and respected in educational environments that recognize their cultural holidays. This acknowledgment allows students to avoid the stress of missing school events or assignments during significant religious observances, thus improving their academic experience overall. *Importantly, this legislature will essentially be inconsequential for those who do not practice Islam and they will experience minimal impact, as this initiative serves to affirm cultural respect rather than impose obligations.*

Lastly, I understand there may be fears of backlash from individuals who view the recognition of Eid holidays as extreme or threatening. However, we must remember that inclusivity is the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy. By embracing our differences, we foster understanding and solidarity among our diverse communities, ultimately strengthening the fabric of Maine society for everyone.

In conclusion, I strongly encourage you to support Bill LD724. By recognizing these two days, Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha as official holidays, we demonstrate Maine's commitment to inclusivity, respect, and recognition of the rich cultural diversity that enhances our state.

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of an important initiative.

Best regards,

Kamil Sylvain

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Maine Resident and Entrepreneur

Kamil Sylvain
Lewiston
LD 724

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