Hello,

My name is Aliza Kazmi and I am the Advocacy Manager at the Council on American Islamic Relations’ San Francisco Bay Area chapter. We are a civil rights, legal aid and civic engagement organization that is based in Santa Clara and serves the entire Bay Area region’s 250,000 plus Muslims. Personally, I live in Union City, previously lived in Oakland, and grew up in Hercules.

As an advocacy organization that works with various groups and individuals, namely our region’s mosques and other Muslim organizations, our goal is to uplift these and other spaces that define our community by bringing Muslims together. Because Muslims are incredibly diverse – socioeconomically, in terms of citizenship status, and across ethnic identities: mosques are one kind of space that characterize our community. Muslims gather at mosques on up to a weekly or daily basis to pray, study our faith, and be in community together. I look forward to continuing to gather information from different local Muslim leaders and community members to share further written input with the Commission in the coming weeks: including on which mosques and other spaces should be kept together or combined in redrawing the district lines in areas like Richmond, East and West Oakland, Fremont, San Jose and Santa Clara – some of the cities where multiple mosques are located.

As some general background,

- Muslims in our community identify as South Asian, Arab, Afghan, Black, AAPI, Iranian, Latinx, and White; among other ethnic groups. At least one in three Muslims here were born abroad and come from countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Egypt, Yemen, Iran, Jordan, and Palestine.
- Working with different community leaders, including mosque leaders, we see that Muslims in our region are highly and increasingly civically engaged. We come together on a range of issues, including fighting for basic economic opportunities for the most vulnerable in our communities – such as recently arrived immigrants and refugees. We persistently push for accountability and change in the various ways that Muslim and non-Muslim people are over-policed and surveilled. We also work to maximize our participation in our democracy – from supporting people in their pathways to citizenship to organizing around voting and meeting and engaging with our local, state and federal elected officials.
- Every year since 2016, Assemblymember Bill Quirk introduces a state legislative resolution to recognize August as American Muslim Appreciation and Awareness Month to recognize Muslims and acknowledge the impact we make as part of our broader community. Many cities and counties have also issued corresponding proclamations over the years. We continue to work on this initiative with our representatives and various community members.

Please feel free to email back with any questions or comments. Thank you.

Best wishes,

Aliza Kazmi
Advocacy Manager
Follow CAIR-SFBA!