

CAPITAL DISTRICT COALITION AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

Resolution in opposition to anti-free speech legislation in the NYS Legislature.

WHEREAS, our Coalition came together in November 2015 as members of local groups that were already working to increase interfaith understanding and to end wars and military violence, racism, homophobia, economic injustice, mass incarceration, hate speech, racial and ethnic profiling, Islamophobia, and abuse of the law enforcement and judicial systems. Our purpose is to counter anti-Muslim hate speech, violence and hostility, and

WHEREAS, in the period since the November 2016 presidential election we have grown increasingly concerned about the growth of Islamophobic, racist, and anti-Semitic hostility and violence, as well as increasing efforts to limit our constitutionally protected rights of freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, and the free exercise of religion, and

WHEREAS, our concerns have led the Coalition in recent months to organize or participate in organizing rallies and vigils in Albany, NY responding to the Islamophobia, racism, anti-Semitism and threats to peace signified by what we have called a “KKK Presidency”, and

WHEREAS, we are gravely concerned regarding efforts in the NYS Legislature to pass laws that would penalize the exercise of free speech and academic freedom, especially - as is relevant to the work of the Coalition - relating to activists working on issues of Islamophobia, racism and anti-Semitism. In particular, we are concerned about three bills which passed the NYS Senate recently: S.2493 (which would deny funding to student groups at public universities who support the international boycott of Israel or who advocate for a boycott against any country deemed to be an “allied nation” of the United States), S.4837 (which would prohibit public universities from providing funding for, among other things, scholars to participate in conferences of scholarly associations if such associations have taken positions in support of the international boycott of Israel), and S.2492 (which would create a state contractual and procurement blacklist of persons and organizations that promote boycotts of “allied nations”), and

WHEREAS, while the Coalition does not have a position regarding the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, we recognize that these proposed laws would constitute significant limitations on the free speech, freedom of association and academic freedom rights we, as activists against Islamophobia, racism and anti-Semitism rely upon and view as central to our work in protecting and advocating for Muslims in our communities, and

WHEREAS, these bills have not yet been presented or voted on in the NYS Assembly, and

WHEREAS, similar bills introduced over the past several years in the New York legislature have consistently been opposed as unconstitutional and as violations of democratic rights by a wide range of groups, including the New York Civil Liberties Union, the New York State United Teachers, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Palestine Legal, Jewish Voice for Peace, the American Friends Service Committee, Peace Action of NYS, Jews for Racial & Economic Justice, the Council on American Islamic Relations, NY, and many others,

THEREFORE,

The Capital District Coalition Against Islamophobia hereby expresses our strong opposition to the specific bills referenced above which recently passed the NYS Senate, as well as to any legislation which limits or penalizes people for their constitutionally protected advocacy and exercise of academic freedom, and the Coalition calls upon all members of the NYS legislature to reject these bills and any similar proposed legislation.

The Coalition further expresses our view that passing these unconstitutional bills or similar legislation would not in any manner assist in the struggles against Islamophobia, racism or anti-Semitism.

The Coalition will join with other organizations in NY State to combat these efforts to limit or penalize the exercise of free speech and academic freedom.

The Coalition will inform all local NYS legislators of our strong opposition to this type of legislation and of our demand that they oppose such legislation.

ADOPTED: March 22, 2017