

Good Afternoon,

At the cross country District Invitationals in 2019, my teammates and I went to the starting line to get checked in as usual. They checked our jerseys and accessories to make sure no one violated the uniform. Everything went smoothly. I cleared my head and stepped up to the starting line, ready to race.

After a very difficult race, I achieved a personal record. My teammates and I celebrated, learning that we qualified for regionals. We rushed to check our individual placings. I ran my finger down the list and quickly noticed that my name was not on the scoreboard next to my teammates' names. I was certain that it was just an error. My teammates then looked at me in all seriousness and told me that I have been disqualified. When I inquired about the reason behind the disqualification, one of the girls responded, "Because of your hijab."

Cross Country was a means for me to leave my troubles behind, but this felt like the complete opposite. Full of emotions, I wanted to hide away in my room and let the time pass. My older sister reminded me that our younger sister's journey in athletics has just begun, and her being the next hijabi athlete in the Abukaram household, she, and all future minority athletes, will have to endure the same type of discrimination that I have dealt with. Considering this, I decided to tell my story. My experience quickly gained global uproar being featured in The Washington Post, The New York Times, Good Morning America, Time Magazine, CNN, Sports Illustrated, ESPN, and many more.

Since then, my "unique" circumstance suddenly became a common reality. I received many messages from people around the world who had faced similar discrimination. I came to the realization that most athletes who face discrimination do not have the opportunity to share their experiences. This empowered me to start the Let Noor Run (LNR) initiative, which aims to "fight discrimination and injustices that hinder us from doing what we love."

We hosted our LNR kickoff event in January, 2020, which aimed to host different dialogues within the sports community to further educate and shed light on discrimination in sports.

We raised money for schools to be equipped with sports hijabs for hijabi athletes to make sports more inclusive in Ohio schools

I visited Ohio schools to speak to young kids about discrimination and civic participation

I fought diligently for my right to run in a hijab I even came here a year ago to testify in front of you all.

And today I am here again testifying for the same bill. Because even with all the work I've done during the 2020 cross country season and the 2021 track season I experienced more race day anxiety than ever before. I remember as I was walking on the bus for my first cross country meet of the season stopping in my tracks to turn around to ask my mom if I was gonna be okay at this meet referring to my hijab my mom pulled out the rule book we learned that I don't need a waiver but whether or not I race is under the discretion of the official. I went on throughout the season with no problems.

In April 2021 at a track meet in Amherst, Ohio as I was waiting on the starting line during my mile relay for my teammate to approach for my handoff. The official approached me and asked if I had my waiver confidently I told him I don't need one, he proceeded to tell me I do and that he'll let me go this time. By this time my teammate was finishing her fourth lap. My heart was racing, my hands were shaking and tears started running down my face as I got handed the

baton. I ran a PR and finished the race still shaking. At the checkin of my second race of the day I was stopped again and asked for a waiver by a different official. At that point, I knew that there was still a lot of work to be done regardless of a "rule change" it was insufficient and insulting. I have never spoken of the events that took place last month before now. I stand before you today, hat in hand, or should I say hijab, asking you all to be on the progressive side of history and support this bill. I know that all the international media is meaningless without law makers willing to hear my voice and implementing the necessary change.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me today.