



**Council on American-Islamic Relations, Columbus, Ohio**  
4242 Tuller Road, Suite B2  
Dublin, Ohio 43017  
Telephone: 614-451-3232  
Fax: 614-451-3222  
[www.cair-columbus.com](http://www.cair-columbus.com)

TO: HOUSE EDUCATION AND CAREER READINESS COMMITTEE  
FROM: COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS, COLUMBUS, OHIO CHAPTER  
DATE: March 13, 2018  
RE: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 360

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee - My name is Usjid Hameed and I am the Public Affairs Coordinator for the Columbus Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Ohio (CAIR-Columbus) and I appear to present proponent testimony on HB 360.

Like all Ohioans, CAIR-Columbus is incredibly concerned about bullying. A 2016 Fact Sheet published by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) revealed that 20% of high school students reported being bullied in a 2015 nationwide survey.<sup>1</sup> The publication went on to report that “victimized youth are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and poor school adjustment” and “youth who bully others are at increased risk for substance use, academic problems, and violence later in adolescence and adulthood.”<sup>2</sup>

The American-Muslim community is especially impacted by the issue of bullying. According to a 2017 study by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), 42% of Muslim children experience bullying on the basis of their religion.<sup>3</sup> CAIR-Columbus works with many of these victimized youth to ensure that school districts properly address incidents of bullying. CAIR-Columbus’ legal team has worked on a wide array of bullying incidents, ranging from an incident where a young girl suffered a concussion to an incident where a teacher physically assaulted a young student in class. We believe Ohio needs an explicit and unambiguous anti-bullying state statute to ensure that there is a safe learning environment for Ohio’s students.

CAIR-Columbus feels that HB 360 contains many effective provisions to address bullying. HB 360 allows for the districts to offer counseling for the suspended or expelled pupil which will aid in uncovering and remedying the pupil’s motivations for engaging in bullying. This rehabilitative-focused provision will help to prevent future incidents of bullying.

HB 360 also mandates that the school district maintain a record verifying that the parent or guardian is notified of any incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. This is a vital provision of the bill as it

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<sup>1</sup> “Understanding Bullying: Fact Sheet 2016,” Center for Disease Control, Accessed March 5, 2018. [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying_factsheet.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “American Muslim Poll 2017: Muslims at The Crossroads,” Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. Accessed March 5, 2018. <https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/AMP-2017-Key-Findings.pdf>

will ensure that parents are informed regarding incidents of bullying against their children. As it stands, sometimes parents are left in the dark when their children are bullied in school.

In addition, this bill mandates that the superintendent of a school district investigate any report of bullying, intimidation, or harassment by a school official or volunteer. While this provision will protect all students, it will especially benefit American-Muslim students in Ohio. According to the report by ISPU referenced earlier, a quarter of all bullying incidents against Muslim students involve a school official or teacher.<sup>4</sup> This provision will help deter school officials from bullying students.

For these reasons, CAIR-Columbus urges committee members to vote in favor of HB 360, to help make Ohio's schools a safer and more comfortable place to learn.

Thank you.

Usjid Hameed



Public Affairs Coordinator  
CAIR-Columbus

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.