

June 20, 2012

The Honorable Peter T. King
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman King:

The undersigned organizations, including religious, secular, and interfaith groups, advocacy organizations, legal and community groups, support civil rights, human rights, and freedom of religion, speech, and association.

Many of our organizations have voiced strong concerns with the series of hearings that began in March 2011 and has been targeted at the Muslim community. Our concerns proved to be warranted.

We agree that Congress has an obligation to examine legitimate threats to national security. Yet, this series of hearings scrutinized a specific group of Americans, singled out solely because of their religion. This is simply wrong.

The hearings, which focused on the American Muslim community and examined First Amendment-protected activities, are an affront to our fundamental rights and values. They have undermined our nation's commitment to religious liberty, free association, free speech, and equal protection of the law.

These hearings have sent the false message to the public that Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim are worthy of suspicion and scrutiny. Rhetoric employed has been factually inaccurate and, in fact, counterproductive to maintaining respectful relationships between American Muslims, law enforcement, public officials, and communities.

Today's hearing represents a skewed examination of the previous hearings' impact on the Muslim community. We urge you to discontinue this series of hearings, which undermines fundamental American values, erodes trust, and fuels divisiveness by casting suspicion over an entire community.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers In Action
Alliance for Justice
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFFE)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Humanist Association
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Arab American Institute
Catholics for Choice
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Defending Dissent Foundation
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
Faith in Public Life
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Human Rights First
Institute for Science and Human Values
Interfaith Alliance
Islamic Society of North America
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
KinderUSA
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Bar Association of New York
Muslim Consultative Network
Muslim Progressive Traditionalist Alliance
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP
National Council of Jewish Women
New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good
People For the American Way
Political Research Associates
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness
Rabbis for Human Rights-North America
Rights Working Group
Secular Coalition for America
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

cc: The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member
Members of the Committee