



May 5, 2015

Mr. Jacob Bender, Executive Director
Council on American-Islamic Relations Pennsylvania
Philadelphia Chapter
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Mr. Bender:

Thank you for speaking with me recently regarding your suggestion that SEPTA donate the proceeds of the American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) advertisements to local homeless service organizations.

As we discussed, SEPTA is an instrumentality of the state that receives a significant portion of its operating and capital budget from the taxpayers of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This prevents SEPTA from making monetary donations to outside organizations – no matter how worthy the cause. However, the more than 9,000 men and women who are SEPTA view their role as more than operating buses and trains – we connect the region’s diverse citizens and unite its communities.

Part of SEPTA’s commitment to the communities we serve includes the annual “Stop Hunger at your Station” food drive. In six years, SEPTA riders and employees have donated more than 100 tons of food to Philabundance. Additionally, SEPTA continues to partner with the City of Philadelphia and non-profit organizations on efforts to end homelessness through outreach, education and intervention. Indeed, SEPTA’s recent partnership with Project HOME – the “Hub of Hope” in Suburban Station – has reduced the homeless population in SEPTA’s Center City facilities by 50 percent.

I am pleased to write you today, following the removal of the offensive ads from SEPTA buses over the past weekend. The efforts of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations to educate and engage the public were instrumental in negating the impact of the ads and fostering greater religious understanding and civil discourse. CAIR’s message of inclusion and tolerance was and is a powerful antidote to those whose only goal is to disparage. Thank you again for all of your efforts to mobilize your organization and the entire interfaith community to stand against these ads.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis E. Kelly".
Francis E. Kelly
Assistant General Manager
Public and Government Affairs

cc: Joseph M. Casey
General Manager