



# MUSLIM DAY AT CITY HALL AGENDA

June 5, 2023 | Philadelphia, PA

1400 John F Kennedy Blvd, Philadelphia, PA 19107

**9:00-9:15 AM**

Arrive at City Hall/ Registration

*City Hall, Caucus Room*

*(4th floor, Rm. 401)*

**9:15 - 9:45 AM**

Preparation/Coordination

*Caucus Room*

**10:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

Scheduled Meetings

**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**

Lunch

*Caucus Room*

**1:30 PM - 2:00 PM**

Press Conference

*South Apron*

**2:30 PM**  
Departure

# MUSLIM DAY AT CITY HALL

## ADVOCACY AGENDA

June 5, 2023 | Philadelphia, PA

### Helpful Tips for a successful Advocacy Meeting

- *Build a Relationship:* Advocacy and politics is about relationships. Take some time to connect on common issues, local connections or who you are. It will help your advocacy be more successful and find unusual opportunities to advocate for solutions.
- *Localize the Problem:* We have provided key talking points on several issues, but you should put it in your own words. The more you can localize or personalize the issue you are discussing, the better.
- *50/50 Rule:* You want to speak no more than 50% of the time. The best is to ask lots of questions and give the legislator/staff time to engage in discussion.
- *Clear, Direct Ask:* Make your ask direct, specific and short. Then pause and wait for an answer. If you don't get a clear one, keep talking and then come back again before developing a follow-up plan.
- *Be honest:* If you don't know the answer to a question, that is okay. Be honest and get back to them.
- *Have a follow-up plan:* This is the start of our push for a Common Agenda. Have a plan to get more information from them, next steps on pushing these solutions forward.

### Sample Meeting Agenda (30 minute meeting)

*The below agenda is for a 30 minute meeting, but you may sometimes have more/less.*

- *Introductions (3 minutes):* Go around the room and introduce yourself including where you live and 1-2 sentences on why you came today to advocate on behalf of the Philadelphia Muslim Community. \*Confirm the length of the meeting.\*
- *Build Relationship (5 minutes):* Discuss their priorities, connect on other issues or common interests.
- *Problem (3-5 minutes):* Focus on one of the issues identified in our Advocacy Agenda, articulating how it connects to the community, or you personally. The goal here is to get the legislator to understand the core problem, why it happens and connect emotionally on the need for action.
- *Solution (3 minutes):* You will want to discuss why and how the issue should be addressed? How can they help/ how can we as a community help them.
- *Ask:* Have a clear ask as noted in the target notes.

# Advocacy Agenda- Talking Points

## City-Wide Eid Holiday Recognition

### *Issue:*

- The School District of Philadelphia has recognized both Eids on its calendars. This came as a result of the Philadelphia Eid Coalition's years of work.

### *Ask:*

- We expect the City Council to take a proactive role to ensure a city-wide Eid recognition that would enable City employees to take both Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha off.

## Halal Meals and Prayer Accommodations in Schools

### *Issue: Halal Meals*

- Halal food is often unavailable in places where the need and demand are high, specifically in schools, but this also applies to hospitals and prisons, where options are limited and individuals rely heavily on the meals they are provided. Islamic Services of America (ISA) writes that underprivileged students in many K-12 schools end up missing lunch and going home hungry at the end of the day due to a lack of suitable halal options.
- In fact, the Washington Post explains that students “revert to junk food, cookies and candy,” or “grilled cheese and veggie sides for days on end” when halal meat is unavailable, with some desperate students forced to ignore their values and eat forbidden food due to a lack of options<sup>1</sup>.
- However, by incorporating halal options into school lunches, the Dearborn Public Schools in Dearborn, Michigan saw that their new food program was now serving thousands more meals per day than it did at the same time the previous year.

***Ask:***

- Philadelphia has a significantly higher Muslim population than most cities in America, but the fact remains that by implementing a simple change, such as offering more halal options in the cafeteria, thousands of students would benefit from access to culturally relevant, healthy meal options. We are seeking accommodations for access to halal meals in Philadelphia public schools.

***Issue: Establishment of prayer spaces***

- Muslim students' needs are too often disregarded by the municipal and public school systems and good efforts are underway in different Philadelphia schools
- We are encouraged by our discussions with the School District officials to achieve prayer accommodation - including for Jummah prayers- for thousands of Muslim students and employees.

***Ask:***

- We expect City Council to support and encourage these steps by holding special plenary sessions about prayer and halal meal accommodations in Philadelphia schools.

**Voting Rights and Language Access**

***Issue:***

- The past two decades have seen an increase in efforts to expand and protect voting rights; however, despite these efforts, restrictive laws continue to be passed across the country targeting primarily Black and minority communities, disabled Americans, socioeconomically disadvantaged citizens, and -- particularly seen this year -- young adults. It is imperative that Philadelphia sets the standard for expanded voting rights and a smooth process for voting, and language access in the ballot box.
- In the wake of the upcoming 2024 presidential election, we remain committed to advocating for the passage of significant voting rights legislation and educating local communities on electoral races.

**ASK:**

- City Commissioners passed a motion last September to form The Language Access Advisory Committee. Applications were invited for this committee, and the intent was to put it in place before the Primary Election. This did not happen.
  - Commissioners should prioritize establishing this Committee— applicants should receive responses as soon as possible
  - City Council should make funds available to enact full language access for minorities, on par with cities like Los Angeles and Chicago.

**Public Safety and Gun Violence Prevention**

**Issue: Gun Violence**

- Gun violence continues to be a prominent issue in Philadelphia with both the victims AND perpetrators getting younger and younger. We are engaged in conversations in our communities to ensure our youth can get out of the cycle of violence.

**Ask:**

- We expect City Council to take the lead in enacting a city-wide, neighborhood-based conversation series, through a participatory process. There are key stakeholders connected to the community, from clergy to musicians, from elders to non-profits that should be included in these meetings.

**Fair Policing**

**Issue:**

- The Plain View Project revealed in 2019 that Philadelphia Police Department members had been posting virulently anti-Muslim content on their social media platforms. While some of these individuals have been penalized for their posts, the follow up steps promised by the city to

develop programs aimed at training PPD members on the city's rich Muslim history and against Islamophobia has been lagging.

**Ask:**

- Our communities expect the City Council to foreground steps to ensure the PPD
  - does not think we can arrest our way out of the issues facing our city
  - is held accountable for civil rights violations
  - does not bring back harmful policies such as stop and frisk that lead to racial targeting
  - Philadelphia's own Muslim community leaders are engaged in training the police force in the history of Islam and dangers of Islamophobia
  - We also support efforts to bring additional, real legs to the Philadelphia Citizen Police Oversight Committee
- What steps can the city government take to address islamophobia and anti-Blackness within Philadelphia's law enforcement and criminal justice systems and how can it work with Black Muslim leaders and organizations to ensure the safety and protection of their communities?

**Quality of Education**

***Issue: Asbestos/ Building infrastructure/Resources***

- Philadelphia School District should be ensuring that its students receive a quality education and in order to do this they **MUST** first have a safe and welcoming physical learning environment. Instead some of these buildings have been battling several infrastructure issues such as poor heating & cooling systems, exposure to asbestos, and general disrepair.
- With several of the school buildings aging back to over 70 years old, the use of asbestos has been a huge problem facing the school district. During the 2022-23 school year approx. 6 school buildings were forced to close due to exposure of asbestos. Schools have been shut down and

forced to remote learning (which is not always suitable for students and their families).

- Resources within the SDP are also extremely behind what resources neighboring district peers may have available to them

***Ask:***

- We urge the city council to advocate for high quality learning environments that both provide a healthy, suitable atmosphere as well as updated resources to promote better learning.

***Issue: Quality of Educators***

- Research shows that having a teacher of color can help students of color reach better outcomes; but the benefits extend to all young people; preparing them to live and work in an increasingly diverse society. For example, a 2017 study by IZA Institute of Labor Economics found that for poor black boys, it decreases the risk of dropping out by nearly 40%. The Philadelphia School District has almost 200,000 students. 85% are minority students yet the teaching staff is 70% white.

***Ask:***

- How could City Council work with the School District and their constituents to ensure the population of educators within the district are accurately representing the body of students/families they serve?