



Council on American-Islamic Relations  
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Good afternoon Councilmembers, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Salam Alaykum, greetings of peace, Merhaba,

My name is Ahmet Tekelioglu, and I am the Executive Director of CAIR-Philadelphia, the Philadelphia chapter of Council on American-Islamic Relations. Our organization provides free legal services, civil rights advocacy, and community organizing/ empowerment programs for Muslim communities across the region.

I am here today to join my colleagues to address the civil rights implications of intensified federal immigration enforcement. I will focus on how these practices intersect with longstanding patterns of surveillance and profiling, with particular emphasis on their impact on Muslim communities in Philadelphia.

From a civil rights and legal standpoint, this is not solely an immigration issue. It is a question of how enforcement practices interact with constitutional protections, local governance authority, and the ability of residents to safely access public institutions.

CAIR-Philadelphia's work is grounded in decades of documented experience. Muslim communities—particularly those who are Black, Arab, South Asian, and immigrant—have been subject to illegal surveillance and law enforcement scrutiny for decades- starting in the 1930s. These practices impact our communities in every neighborhood of Philadelphia.

This includes the targeting of our Black Muslim leaders who were leaders in the civil rights movement and African-American dignity, as well as post-9/11 programs involving informants, mosque monitoring, and intelligence gathering that operated with virtually no transparency or accountability.

These surveillance practices did not remain isolated—they produced long-term harm. They eroded trust in government, chilled religious expression, traumatized generations and created a baseline fear that routine community activity could be monitored or misinterpreted.

Current ICE enforcement patterns reinforce and expand these harms.

When immigration enforcement is perceived as broad, unpredictable, or data-driven, it compounds existing concerns within Muslim communities—especially for individuals in mixed-status families or those already navigating racial and religious profiling. The result is a layered chilling effect: individuals disengage not only from federal systems, but from local institutions as well.

As a Muslim American who was not a citizen until 6 months ago, I experienced these anxieties and realities myself. Shortly after talking about my immigration status at a rally here in the City Hall, I was doxxed as a “suspected foreign national”- whatever that means- on a fascist platform – Canary Mission- that took credit for the ICE arrests of student activists like Mahmoud Khalil and Rumeysa Ozturk. For months, I monitored

my neighborhood for unmarked cars, and built a plan with my wife on what to do if I was stopped while driving our two kids to their school.

This brings us to a critical technical issue: data governance and information-sharing.

While Philadelphia has adopted executive policies to place some limits on formal cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, those policies are **not** sufficient to address the full ecosystem of risk. Gaps remain in:

- Inter-agency data access and standardization
- Data held by third-party vendors and contractors
- Informal or indirect information-sharing practices
- And the lack of clear limitations on how personally identifiable information may be retained, queried, or disclosed

From a civil rights perspective, these gaps are significant. They create conditions where data collected for benign, local purposes—such as accessing city services or applying for city grants—can potentially be leveraged in ways that expose residents to federal enforcement.

For communities with **a lived history of surveillance**, this is not hypothetical—it is a rational and evidence-based concern.

This is why at CAIR-Philadelphia we believe the passage of ICE Out legislation is essential.

Importantly, legislation carries durability. Unlike executive orders, which can be modified or unevenly applied, codified law provides clearer guidance, enforceability, and public confidence.

From CAIR-Philadelphia's perspective, this is fundamentally about restoring trust. Our communities from South Philadelphia to West Philadelphia, from Northeast Philadelphia to Southwest Philadelphia are expecting this body and this administration to pass ICE Out legislation without further delay.

When residents believe that their data is protected, they are more likely to report crimes, seek healthcare, apply to grants, engage with schools, and participate in civic life. When they do not, the consequences extend far beyond any one community—they impact public safety, public health, and the integrity of our local institutions.

We therefore urge the City Council to pass strong ICE Out legislation and ensure that it includes robust data governance provisions, meaningful oversight, and clear enforcement mechanisms.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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