



SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

Standing with American Muslims. Advancing American Ideals.

The Honorable Benjamin Cardin, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
428A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rand Paul, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
428A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

August 9, 2021

Re: National Faith-Based and Interfaith Groups Call on the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee to Avoid Religious Litmus Tests for Administration Officials

Dear Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Paul,

As national religious denominations and faith-based organizations who work together with the [Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign](#), we represent faith communities across the United States with diverse political perspectives and backgrounds. We work to address anti-Muslim discrimination in order to advance our vision of a nation where all Americans are treated with fairness, equality, and respect, no matter their faith or background.

We do not normally comment on presidential appointments, nor the Senate confirmation process, we feel morally compelled to speak out. After learning that some members of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee repeatedly boycotted a vote on Dilawar Syed's nomination as Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA) after throwing out his advancement in a prior committee vote with bipartisan support. This boycott happened simultaneously with the circulation of a troubling strategy email that highlighted Mr. Syed's birthplace in Pakistan and his association and civic work with a Muslim American advocacy organization.

We understand this is the first time in the committee's long history that it has chosen to boycott a vote on a nominee. We are deeply concerned by the apparent anti-Muslim animus driving this unprecedented action against Dilawar Syed, who, if confirmed, would

be the highest-ranking American Muslim serving in the executive branch of the United States government.

Our constitution prohibits an ethnic or religious test for holding public office. To do so violates our nation's valued principle of religious freedom. No one should be denied the ability to hold office because of what they look like or how they choose to worship.

We ask that you bring an immediate end to this unprecedented boycott and allow a fair vote to proceed on Dilawar Syed's nomination.

Sincerely,

The Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign: Standing with American Muslims, Advancing American Ideals

African American Ministers In Action

Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC)

Church World Service

Christian Unity and Interfaith Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Episcopal Church Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations,
Office of the Presiding Bishop

Interfaith Alliance

Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue at Jewish Theological Seminary

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Peace Catalyst International

Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and Union for Reform Judaism

Sojourners

United Church of Christ, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Ministries