

Jews and Muslims and Allies Acting Together (JAMAAT), a community of grass-roots Jews, Muslims and Interfaith Allies from across the Greater Washington, DC metropolitan area, is writing to express our strong support for the National Origin-Based Anti-discrimination for Non-Immigrants (NO BAN) Act. The NO BAN Act would end the harmful blanket travel bans put in place by this Administration that have imposed unnecessary and unfair restrictions on large numbers of refugees, asylum seekers, and individuals with legitimate reasons to enter the United States and establish vital protections against future discriminatory bans.

JAMAAT was founded by Jews, Muslims, and interfaith allies to assure that our government and communities provide the same vital protections to the Muslims and Jews in our midst that it provides to all other members of our national and local populations. It is difficult to conceive of measures as clearly violative of the fundamental rights that should be accorded to all of our religious and ethnic communities than the “travel bans” imposed by the Trump Administration, both in its initial and subsequent iterations.

Prior to the imposition of these “travel bans”, persons wishing to come to the United States were evaluated according to their individual merit, and the government could bar any who might pose a risk to the country because, for example, they have engaged in terrorist or criminal activity, carry a serious communicable disease, or their entry would be contrary to U.S. foreign policy goals. The current “travel bans” void these screening mechanisms, and instead prevent many thousands of residents of primarily Muslim countries from entering this country, regardless of their individual merit. The NO BAN Act would restore the original intent of our immigration laws for many decades, by requiring that any restrictions on entry of groups of people be supported by credible facts, are of a defined duration, and are necessary to address specific acts that threaten the safety of the American public, human rights, democracy, or international stability.

We are called by our sacred texts and faith principles to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner. And we have come to the United States and thrived in this country based on the certainty provided by our Constitution that people will be evaluated for entry, just as residents of this country must be treated after they arrive, based on their individual merit and not because of some allegedly undesirable characteristics due to their nationality or religion. To close the door to those who are Muslim or of other faiths, or are nationals of particular predominantly Muslim countries, is not a faithful expression of the principle that all are created equal – and is not based on any credible national security rationale. This manner of exclusion weakens what has made our country strong – a commitment to stand with the vulnerable, the oppressed, the suffering, regardless of their religious faith or where they come from.

The NO BAN Act upholds principles of religious freedom and our moral obligation to welcome. It would ensure that no one is banned from our country based on religious or nationality-based discrimination. The bill seeks important changes to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) by outlawing discrimination in the entry of immigrants or nonimmigrants based on religion, in addition to the protections against discrimination based on race, sex, nationality, place of birth, and place of residence already in place. The NO BAN Act also amends the provision of the INA that has granted presidents the authority to suspend or restrict the entry of non-citizens by

limiting this authority to align with responsible uses of the power by prior Democratic and Republican administrations, and by putting in place key congressional notification and reporting requirements as important safeguards against any future abuses of this authority. We urge you to support the NO BAN Act and be bold in choosing moral, just policies that welcome, regardless of faith or national origin, and provide refuge for vulnerable individuals seeking protection in accordance with our nation's highest ideals.