



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN
ATTORNEY GENERAL

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

December 9, 2015

Dear Friend:

As New York State's chief law enforcement officer, I feel compelled to respond to the many proposals and comments directed at Muslim Americans in recent weeks.

Our nation's rich history of religious diversity is reflected in the Bill of Rights and in laws that protect the rights of New Yorkers of every religion to freely practice their faith and to participate in every aspect of our society. As religious diversity across our country grows, these protections become even more important.

While some have chosen to exploit fear and anger by targeting certain religious minorities, I want to emphasize in the strongest possible terms that my office stands ready to enforce all state and federal civil rights laws protecting the liberty and equality of people of all religions.

Our nation was founded on a single, aspirational principle: "equal justice under law." That is equal justice for everyone, regardless of religion. For centuries, we have taken pride in the fact that millions of people have come to our shores to escape religious persecution. There was a path that would feel painfully familiar to the religious minorities who seek refugee status here today. As New Yorkers, we have a proud tradition of openness and tolerance of people from all parts of the world, from all walks of life, and from all religions.

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In 2011, my office launched the Religious Rights Initiative, which is dedicated to addressing religious discrimination claims and ensuring that anti-discrimination laws are aggressively enforced. In 2012, my office secured an agreement with the largest municipal healthcare organization in the country to safeguard all employees' rights to religious accommodations. In February 2015, my office joined a coalition of states in filing a friend-of-the-court brief with the US Supreme Court in support of a Muslim woman who had been denied employment at an Abercrombie & Fitch store because she wore a hijab.

If you become aware of potential violations of laws protecting all New Yorkers from discrimination, please contact the Civil Rights Bureau of my office to make a complaint. To make a report, please call us at (212) 416-8250 or send an email to Civil.Rights@ag.ny.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric T. Schneiderman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

ERIC T. SCHNEIDERMAN