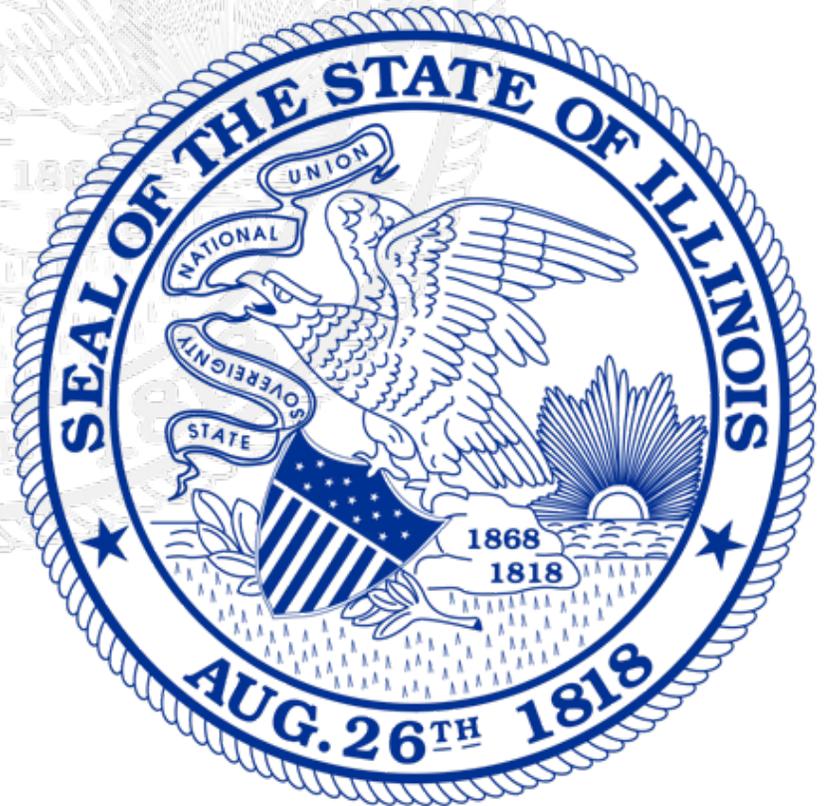


**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
MUSLIM AMERICAN ADVISORY COUNCIL**



**SECOND SEMIANNUAL REPORT**

**DECEMBER 31, 2013**

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# Letter

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Dear Governor Quinn,

It gives us great pleasure to submit the second semiannual report of your Muslim American Advisory Council (“MAAC” or the “Council”).



## Governor’s Iftar Dinner Springfield, IL

You truly honored Illinois’ Muslims by hosting the first-ever “Iftar” Dinner at the Executive Mansion in 2013, marking the first time an Illinois Governor has ever hosted such an event (although this American interfaith tradition dates back to President Thomas Jefferson) – not to mention your continued participation in our religious celebrations (“Eid al-Fitr” and “Eid al-Adha”).

We thank you for implementing several policy recommendations made by MAAC in 2013 including enacting the Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act into law, maintaining funding for immigrant and refugee services, and approving Preferred SurgiCenter, LLC’s proposal to establish the first health care facility in the nation to meet the needs of Muslim American patients. (However, the enrollment of Illinois Muslims under the Affordable Care Act remains a concern of ours.)

This report builds upon our past work on violence prevention and surveillance safeguards and offers new ideas to reduce youth unemployment, improve services to immigrants and refugees, and foster inclusive and equitable workplace environments for Muslim State employees.

On behalf of Illinois’ Muslims, thank you, Governor Quinn, for considering our latest recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

MAAC Members

# Table of Contents

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LETTER.....	2
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	4
Economic Development.....	4
Public Health and Safety.....	5
Human Services.....	6
Government Services.....	7
APPENDIX.....	8
Exhibit A: Cultural Sensitivity Guide for State Employees .....	8

# Recommendations

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## Economic Development

- ❖ **Launch the “Give Illinois Youth a Chance!” Program to Reduce Youth Unemployment.** Illinois teen unemployment rates rank among the highest in the nation. According to the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, nearly three quarters (72%) of Illinois teens were unemployed in 2012. This represents an enormous loss of teen work experience with adverse effects on their future employability and wages. Moreover, the underutilization rate of Illinois teens has exploded over the past decade and is the highest by far of any age group in our State.

MAAC urges Governor Quinn to launch a new, year-round youth jobs program called “Give Illinois Youth a Chance!” The goal of the program is to provide Illinois youth (ages 14-24) comprehensive training and employment opportunities in partnership with faith- and community-based organizations, Illinois businesses and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. At minimum, the program ought to have the following four components:

1. Personal Responsibility Training: 2 months of personal responsibility training using evidence-based cognitive behavioral group techniques, including goal-setting, problem-solving and character-building exercises, will facilitate their transition into adulthood. (Youth suffering from any trauma or alcohol or substance abuse must be identified during this period and referred to pre-approved counselors.)
2. Job Readiness Training: 1 month of job readiness training using Illinois workNet, including time and money management, application and resume development, job search and interviewing skills, workplace skills and conflict resolution, will prepare them for employment. (Certain youth must be eligible for stipends to cover transportation and daycare expenses during personal responsibility and job readiness training.)
3. Mentorship: 3-9 months of mentorship (concurrent with employment), including career education and structured pathways related to their academic and career interests, will help them successfully transition into the workforce. (Mentors must have at least 5 years of experience in a particular career and clear a criminal background check. They must spend at least 2 hours per week with their assigned mentee(s).)
4. Employment: 3-9 months of age-appropriate, full-time subsidized employment, earning an hourly rate of \$10.00, at participating worksites in nationally recognized career clusters, including health care and manufacturing, will help them gain valuable work experience. (Employers who retain participants after program completion must be eligible for certain State tax benefits.)

# Recommendations

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“Give Illinois Youth a Chance!” must target communities with the highest teen unemployment rates in our State. Coalitions of faith- and community-based organizations, businesses and educational institutions within these communities must be established to design, implement and evaluate the program. (Certain factors such as job creation and retention and pursuit of additional training and higher education must be evaluated to prove the program’s effectiveness.)

## Public Health and Safety

❖ **Evaluate Violence Prevention Strategies using Program Impact Methodologies.** Illinois Muslims care deeply about reducing risk factors for youth gun violence in our State. The State has invested millions of dollars in programs designed to reduce violence; but evaluations of those programs have not been rigorous enough to determine whether or not those programs are cost-effective. Consistent with the next steps of Budgeting for Results, Governor Quinn’s anti-violence strategy (beginning with the Summer Youth Employment Program) must be rigorously evaluated using community-based participatory research methods, in addition to current assessments. Such methods are analogous to clinical trials common in the medical field which has made dramatic progress over the past 50 years in reducing death rates from diseases – hence, the public health approach to gun violence prevention.

The social cost of gun violence in Chicago alone is \$2.5 billion per year.<sup>1</sup> It is imperative that policymakers invest in evidence-based practices and proven program models that reduce youth gun violence. Evaluations must be conducted by a third party such as the University of Chicago, University of Illinois or Northwestern University; and, therefore, 15-20 percent of the monies allocated to any violence prevention program must be set-aside for an evaluation. Suggested measures and risk factors include but are not limited to: (i) poverty and inadequate living resources; (ii) substance and alcohol use; (iii) school failure; (iv) truancy; (v) participation in antisocial activities and peer groups; and (vi) emotional and psychological trauma. Data must be collected from a variety of verifiable sources, including but not limited to (i) schools, (ii) employers, (iii) community-based organizations and (iv) local law enforcement agencies.

Results of any evaluation must be reported to the Governor and the General Assembly and made available to the public so that our limited financial resources are effectively utilized to reduce the underlying causes of youth gun violence.

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<sup>1</sup> “Gun Violence among School-Age Youth in Chicago,” Crime Lab at the University of Chicago, March 2009.

# Recommendations

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## Public Health and Safety (continued)

- ❖ **Limit the number of State Liquor Licenses in High-Crime Neighborhoods.** According to a Northwestern Medicine study, a person near a liquor store or tavern on Chicago's South and West Sides is up to 500 times more likely to be shot than others in these neighborhoods. Such an incredible association between liquor stores and gun shootings in our most distressed communities is alarming. MAAC urges the Illinois Liquor Control Commission to reduce the number of retailer, special use permit, special event retailer (not-for-profit) and specialty retailer's licenses issued or renewed to business entities located in police districts in which the homicide rate is higher than the State's homicide rate. Additionally, MAAC urges Governor Quinn to direct the Illinois Fresh Food Fund to target these high-crime neighborhoods with the goal of replacing liquor stores with food stores.
- ❖ **Enact Regulations for Privately-Operated Drones (or Unmanned Aircraft Systems).** The Muslim American community commends Governor Quinn for signing Senate Bill 1587 of the 98th General Assembly, Freedom from Drone Surveillance Act, into law (Public Act 98-0569). However, this law concerns drones operated by law enforcement agencies; not commercial enterprises. In view of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration's plan to expand operations of unmanned aircraft systems in the National Airspace System and our opposition to unwarranted drone surveillance or any other measure that infringes upon American constitutional rights and security, MAAC urges Governor Quinn and Illinois lawmakers to mandate appropriate safeguards on the use of privately-operated drones.

## Human Services

- ❖ **Expand immigrant and refugee services programs.** The Muslim American community is grateful to Governor Quinn for enacting measures into law that enable children of immigrants to access higher education (Public Act 97-0233; also known as the Illinois DREAM Act) and allow immigrants to obtain special driver's licenses (Public Act 97-1157). However, to achieve Governor Quinn's goal of making Illinois the most welcoming State in the nation, immigrant and refugee services programs, including cultural and linguistic accommodations, must be broadened to reduce disparities in service in underserved immigrant communities and ensure adequate access for anticipated refugee arrivals including but not limited to Burmese, Congolese and Syrians.

# Recommendations

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## Human Services (continued)

- ❖ **Raise Awareness of Humanitarian Aid to the People of Syria.** Illinois has an impressive track record of extending a helping hand to victims of world disasters. The Muslim American community urges Governor Quinn to call on the people of Illinois to help the people of Syria. The ongoing conflict in Syria, which began in March 2011, has claimed the lives of more than 125,000 Syrians, internally displaced more than 6.5 million Syrians and made refugees of more than 2.3 million Syrians, three-quarters of whom are children.

According to USAID, 9.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria. They are suffering from a massive refugee crisis and humanitarian conditions that worsen day-by-day – specifically, starvation, a polio outbreak, extremely poor medical care and a staggering decline in education for Syrian children. The most effective way to help the people of Syria is to donate to humanitarian or medical organizations that are conducting relief operations. One way to raise awareness of relief efforts in Illinois is to dedicate one week in 2014 as “Syrian Humanitarian Disaster Awareness”.

## Government Services

- ❖ **Offer public employees socially responsible investment options.** Certain ethical restrictions, concerning public welfare, apply to Muslims’ personal finance that are not adhered to by many fund managers (e.g., investments in businesses producing alcohol or manufacturing weapons). The State of Illinois Employees' Deferred Compensation Plan, a supplemental tax-deferred retirement plan for State employees, should consider adding a socially responsible fund (the “fund”), registered with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, to its investment selection, provided that the fund is added via an open and competitive process, to meet the religious needs of its Muslim participants.
- ❖ **Foster inclusive and equitable workplace environments and provide culturally appropriate services to Illinois’ diverse population.** Muslim Americans are the most racially diverse religious group in America, where no race represents a majority. In order to provide appropriate religious accommodations to Illinois Muslims, MAAC requests Governor Quinn to disseminate the cultural sensitivity guide, attached hereto as Exhibit A, to all management personnel at State agencies, departments, boards and commissions under him.

# Appendix

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## EXHIBIT A

### CULTURAL SENSITIVITY GUIDE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

The free exercise of religion is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution. Furthermore, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Illinois Human Rights Act, 775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq., provide that employers may not discriminate on the basis of religion, among other factors, and that employers must accommodate an employee's religious practices unless doing so causes undue hardship to the employer.

Illinois is a multi-faith and multi-cultural State. This guide was prepared by Governor Quinn's Muslim American Advisory Council to foster inclusive and equitable workplace environments at State agencies, departments, boards and commissions and to provide culturally appropriate services to Illinois' diverse population. Muslim Americans are the most racially diverse religious group in America, where no race represents a majority. Note that these guidelines outline general Islamic beliefs and practices and that individual application of these observances may vary.

#### **Cross-Gender Interaction**

The human body is regarded as a sacred (i.e., a "gift" from God) in Islam; therefore, certain social measures are taken to protect it. Here are select norms:

- Most Muslims do not give hugs to or physically embrace unrelated persons of the opposite sex.
- Some Muslims shake hands with unrelated persons of the opposite sex; others view it as prohibited. [Tip: Wait until a Muslim extends his or her hand to you first. Otherwise, do not shake his or her hand.]

#### **Dress Code**

Islam requires women and men to behave and dress modestly. There are a number of ways in which Muslims express such teachings. Here is the most notable attire:

- Muslim women often times wear a headscarf called a hijab.
- Muslim men sometimes wear a small head covering called a kufi.

These articles of clothing should not be prohibited in any dress code policies.

#### **Dietary Restrictions**

The Quran prohibits the consumption of alcohol, pork and pork byproducts. Many Muslims follow standards of slaughter and preparation of meat and poultry called halal. (Halal is to Muslims what kosher is to Jews.) [Tip: Choose a vegetarian or fish option when catering to Muslims.]

# Appendix

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## EXHIBIT A (CONTINUED)

### Prayer

**Daily:** Muslims are required to pray five times a day – before sunrise, around noon, mid-afternoon, at sunset and at night. Before prayer, Muslims are required to wash their faces, hands and feet with clean water. Each prayer takes about 5-10 minutes to perform. Prayer may be performed in any quiet and clean place. During prayer, Muslims stand, bow and prostrate to God, facing Mecca (generally, in the northeast direction). During prayer, Muslims are fully engaged and cannot respond to telephone rings or conversations (with the exception of emergencies). Others should not walk in front of or interrupt Muslims during prayer. Muslim employees may pray during lunch and/or other breaks.

**Weekly:** Muslim men are required (optional for Muslim women) to attend Friday congregational prayer called jum’ah. (Friday congregational prayer is to Muslims what Sunday service is to Christians.) It generally takes place at a mosque (or masjid) during the noontime prayer and includes a sermon. Jum’ah lasts a total of 45-90 minutes. Muslim employees may attend jum’ah during an extended lunch break or another arrangement with their employer so long as no work is missed.

### Pilgrimage

Muslims are required to make a pilgrimage – called hajj – to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. Performing the rituals of hajj may last 5 days (travel durations vary) during the second week of the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar – called Hijri. Muslim employees may choose to make their pilgrimage using vacation time.

### Holidays

**Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr:** Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar (or Hijri) during which Muslims are required to fast from break-of-dawn to sunset. Fasting is intended to help teach Muslims self-restraint from eating, drinking and smoking, among other activities. It is also a time to empathize with those who are less fortunate and to appreciate what one has. Certain Muslims are exempt from fasting (e.g., travelers, pregnant women and ill persons). Fasting does not mean that Muslims cease to work.

Eid al-Fitr, one of the two Islamic holidays, marks the end of Ramadan. (Eid al-Fitr means “Festival of Breaking the Fast” in English.) Muslim employees may take time off from work to celebrate Eid al-Fitr. There should be no undue penalty for this religious obligation.

**Eid al-Adha:** Eid al-Adha (i) commemorates Prophet Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God and (ii) marks the end of the annual Islamic pilgrimage (or hajj) to Mecca. (Eid al-Adha means “Feast of the Sacrifice” in English.) Muslim employees may take time off from work to celebrate Eid al-Adha. There should be no undue penalty for this religious obligation.

# Appendix

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## EXHIBIT A (CONTINUED)

### Holidays (Continued)

**Social Work Events:** Many Muslims are reluctant to take part in social gatherings at which alcohol is served. These employees should not be penalized for not participating in such functions.

If any related matters arise at your workplace or during program development or administration concerning Illinois Muslims, please do not hesitate to consult Governor Quinn's Muslim American Advisory Council.

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