

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2025

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Governor Hochul,

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Chairwoman of House Republican Leadership, Elise Stefanik, have recently learned that the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) is refusing to release copies of K-12 curricula and teaching materials either funded by Qatar or created and distributed by malign domestic actors. We therefore request that your administration provide us with documents and information and initiate an investigation of the NYC DOE's actions.

Qatari Funding

The Qatari royal family's U.S.-based nonprofit, Qatar Foundation International (QFI), has given at least \$1 million in total to two Brooklyn public schools.¹ The money funded the salaries of Arabic teachers and their teaching materials.² The schools that received QFI funding are P.S. 261, an elementary school in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, and P.S./I.S. 30, a K-8 school in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.³

The NYC DOE refused to share copies of QFI-funded teaching materials at P.S. 261, arguing it is only required to send records that contain either statistical tabulations, policies, or staff instructions.⁴ The DOE also refused⁵ to share copies of QFI-funded teaching materials at P.S./I.S. 30, arguing that the request was not reasonably described.⁶

¹ Qatar Foundation International grants for P.S. 261 for years ranging from 2019 to 2024; Qatar Foundation International for contracts for P.S./I.S. 30 from years ranging from 2017 to 2024.

² Qatar Foundation International grants for P.S. 261 for years ranging from 2019 to 2024; Qatar Foundation International for contracts for P.S./I.S. 30 from years ranging from 2017 to 2024.

³ Qatar Foundation International grants for P.S. 261 for years ranging from 2019 to 2024; Qatar Foundation International for contracts for P.S./I.S. 30 from years ranging from 2017 to 2024.

⁴ #F25, 845/Open Records #2025-040-00369. Arab Culture Art Program. FOIL request closed on July 3, 2025

⁵ #F25,846/Open Records #2025-040-000370. Arab Language Program. FOIL request closed on September 22, 2025.

⁶ #F25,800/Open Records #2025-040-000358. Qatar Foundation. FOIL request closed on August 22, 2025.

Malign Domestic Actors

Additionally, the DOE has refused⁷ to provide copies of teaching materials that twist the narratives of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks and the Hamas-led massacre on October 7, 2023, in Israel.⁸ These materials were created by a DOE contractor, Bridging Cultures, a consultancy that specializes in K-12 education and inclusion. Bridging Cultures is led by Dr. Debbie Almontaser, who is also the board president⁹ of the Muslim Community Network¹⁰ (MCN).

Almontaser has a long history of soft-pedaling violence. In 2007, she stepped down¹¹ as principal of Khalil Gibran International Academy, a public middle school that focused on Arabic studies, after supporting the sale of t-shirts that said, “Intifada NYC,” arguing that the word “intifada” was not a violent term.¹²

These two organizations consistently downplay the role of al-Qaeda and Islamist extremism.

A history of rewriting 9/11

Bridging Cultures offers a course titled¹³ “How to Teach about 9/11 in our Multicultural Classrooms: Building Understanding and Compassion.” The course description indicates¹⁴ it will train teachers who want to know, “How do I teach about 9/11 when I have Muslim students in my classroom?” However, Bridging Cultures is a very poor choice to address such issues, since Almontaser and MCN have a history of framing 9/11 in a manner that directs focus away from the role of Islamic extremism.

For example, MCN has promoted a narrative that vilifies those who want to recognize radical Islam’s role in the attacks. In recent years, MCN signed a letter to Congress¹⁵ and also submitted

⁷ #F25,616/Open Records #2025-040-00310. Teaching Materials, etc — Bridging Cultures Workshop — How to teach 9/11. FOIL request closed on June 3, 2025.

⁸ #F25,621/Open Records: #2025-040-000314. DEIB. Updated response to the FOIL’s request status expected on December 22, 2025.

⁹ “Dr. Debbie Almontaser’s Biography,” Muslim Community Network, accessed on October 14, 2025. (<https://www.mcny.org/dr-debbie-almontaser>)

¹⁰ “About Muslim Community Network,” Muslim Community Network, accessed on October 14, 2025. (<https://www.mcny.org/who-we-are>)

¹¹ Chuck Bennett, “‘Intifada’ Principal Resigns,” *New York Post*, August 10, 2007. (<https://nypost.com/2007/08/10/intifada-principal-resigns/>)

¹² Jennifer Medina, “Arabic School Ex-Principal Fights to Get Job Back,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 2007. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/17/education/17principal.html>)

¹³ “Trainings and Workshops,” Bridging Cultures Group INC, accessed on October 14, 2025. (<https://bridgingculturesinc.com/k-12-and-higher-education-services/trainings-and-workshops/>)

¹⁴ “Trainings and Workshops,” Bridging Cultures Group INC, accessed on October 14, 2025. (<https://bridgingculturesinc.com/k-12-and-higher-education-services/trainings-and-workshops/>)

¹⁵ Letter from Anika Nawabi, Executive Director of Muslim Community Network, et al. to The Honorable Joe Neguse, Chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, “Request for Reform at the National September 11 Museum Prior to Additional Federal Funding,” January 10, 2021.

written statements¹⁶ to the House Judiciary Committee asking elected officials to stop funding the National September 11 Memorial & Museum. In a 2021 letter to the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands,¹⁷ MCN joined other advocacy groups and described the museum's exhibits as having "these preexisting narratives unfortunately include false, destructive, and unsubstantiated claims which conflate all Islam with specific terroristic ideologies."

A year later, MCN submitted a written statement to the House Judiciary Committee¹⁸ in response to a hearing on discrimination in Muslim and Arab communities. MCN argued the museum "perpetuates hate and demonizes Islam and Muslims in the United States through the language and imagery used in some of the Museum's exhibits." The letter requested that members of Congress "prevent Federal and taxpayer money from funding institutions that fuel hate and discriminate against minority groups," MCN wrote in the 2022 letter to the House Judiciary Committee¹⁹.

Almontaser is also quoted in a 2023 article in *The Nation*, a progressive monthly magazine, arguing the museum's documentary, "The Rise of Al-Qaeda," "creates a lot of ingrained messages that Islam and Muslims continue to be the enemy."²⁰

Despite the claims of Almontaser and MCN, the museum is not overly focused on Islam. Rather, it devotes a few detailed and historically accurate exhibits²¹ to explaining the differences between Islam, Islamism, and how radical Islam shaped Al Qaeda's justification to use violence.

The museum's documentary film, "The Rise of Al-Qaeda,"²² narrated by former NBC news anchor Brian Williams, is also a fact-driven account of historical events that led to the September 11th terror attacks. The film explains the rise of militant Islamists; the launch of al-Qaeda; its attacks against U.S. interests overseas, such as the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya; and Osama Bin Laden's attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The NYC DOE, in response to a FOIL request,²³ said it did not have a copy of Bridging Cultures' 9/11 training. Due to Almontaser and MCN's history of pushing to silence those who

¹⁶ House Judiciary Hearing on Discrimination and the Civil Rights of the Muslim, Arab, and South Asian American Communities, 117th Cong. (2022). Statement from Muslim Community Network.

¹⁷ Letter from Anika Nawabi, Executive Director of Muslim Community Network, et al. to The Honorable Joe Neguse, Chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, January 10, 2021, "Request for Reform at the National September 11 Museum Prior to Additional Federal Funding."

¹⁸ House Judiciary Hearing on Discrimination and the Civil Rights of the Muslim, Arab, and South Asian American Communities, 117th Cong. (2022). Statement from the Muslim Community Network.

¹⁹ House Judiciary Hearing on Discrimination and the Civil Rights of the Muslim, Arab, and South Asian American Communities, 117th Cong. (2022). Statement of Muslim Community Network.

²⁰ Spencer Ackerman, "Atrocity Exhibition." *The Nation*, October 16-23, 2023 issue.

²¹ "Islamism and the Roots of al-Qaeda," *The National September 11 Memorial & Museum*, New York, October 13, 2025.

²² "The Rise of Al-Qaeda," *The National September 11 Memorial & Museum*, New York, October 13, 2025.

²³ #F25,616/Open Records #2025-040-00310. Teaching Materials, etc. — Bridging Cultures Workshop — How to teach 9/11. FOIL request closed on June 3, 2025.

discuss the role of radical Islam and al-Qaeda in the 2001 terror attacks, it is imperative that city officials share the Bridging Cultures' training to ensure a factual history is being taught.

Taking the hostages out of 10/7

The NYC DOE partnered with Bridging Cultures to train teachers on how to speak to students about 10/7, the war in Gaza, and the anti-Israel protest movement.

Bridging Cultures has held several city-sponsored "Train the Trainer" workshops as part of DOE's "Meet the Moment" response to the 10/7 atrocities. Yet, the facilitation guide²⁴ fails to mention that Hamas killed 1,200 people in Israel on 10/7 and kidnapped more than 250 hostages.

Instead, the mass murder in Israel is described²⁵ as simply "the attack in Israel" in a document that is 24 pages long. In another formulation that erases Israeli suffering, the guide explains,²⁶ "What happened on October 7th and the ongoing bombardment of Gaza for the last 6 months is emotionally devastating by [sic] the rising death toll of 32,000 Palestinians."

Teaching protestors to evade police

In April 2024, MCN advertised its protest training on Facebook,²⁷ which explained that wearing plain, tight clothing makes it harder for authorities to grab protestors or identify them. It also said to put phones on airplane mode, making it harder for police to examine the device.

Partnership with Hamas Apologists

MCN led the effort to get the New York City Council to pass Resolution 95 in November 2024,²⁸ which calls on the Department of Education to develop curricula and professional development focused on religious diversity classes. One partner in that effort²⁹ was the New York chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), whose national executive director, Nihad Awad, said of October 7, "I was happy to see people breaking the siege [of Gaza]," adding, "The Gazans were victorious."³⁰ CAIR has a long history of working with the Muslim Brotherhood

²⁴ Bridging Cultures, "Training Facilitation Guide," Pages 3 and 14.

²⁵ Bridging Cultures, "Training Facilitation Guide," Page 3.

²⁶ Bridging Cultures, "Training Facilitation Guide," Page 3.

²⁷ Muslim Community Network (MCN), Facebook, "Keep yourself safe while protesting and know your rights!," April 26, 2024. (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18x4BxLUic/?mibextid=wwXIf>)

²⁸ New York City Council, Press Release, "NYC Council Adopts Hanif's Resolution 95, Advancing Religious Diversity Education in NYC Public Schools," November 13, 2024. (<https://council.nyc.gov/shahana-hanif/2024/11/13/nyc-council-adopts-hanifs-resolution-95-advancing-religious-diversity-education-in-nyc-public-schools/>)

²⁹ @mcnny, Instagram, "Victory for Inclusivity! Resolution 0095 Has Passed!" November 15, 2024, (https://www.instagram.com/p/DCaUcmTMnny/?img_index=1)

³⁰ @MEMRIReports, X, "CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad at AMP Convention: I Was Happy to See the People of Gaza Break the Siege on October 7; They Were Victorious," December 7, 2023. (<https://x.com/MEMRIReports/status/1732712958281629864>)

and was listed by federal prosecutors as an unindicted co-conspirator in a major terror financing trial in 2007.³¹

New York City Taxpayer Funding

Despite these activities, New York City officials have steered at least \$14.7 million in funds to Bridging Cultures and MCN since 2014.

From 2021 to 2025, at least four city agencies have given slightly over \$8.8 million in contracts to Bridging Cultures, according to financial data from the Office of the New York City Comptroller.³² Bridging Cultures sells teacher trainings to public schools in New York City, diversity trainings to city agencies, and provides Halal food to juvenile facilities, according to city financial records.

At least five city agencies have given just over \$3.6 million in contracts to MCN since 2014, according to financial data from the Office of the New York City Comptroller.³³ These agencies include the Department of Youth and Community Development, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Mayor's Office, providing services such as hate crime prevention training.

Almontaser has successfully influenced several members of the NYC City Council. She has successfully lobbied members to approve giving an additional two days off from school for Muslim holidays,³⁴ and to pass a resolution mandating classes on different religions.³⁵ Since FY 2021, council members have steered more than \$2.3 million in discretionary funds to MCN, according to public data.³⁶ The funds paid for youth mentoring programs, hate crime education, and Muslim community safety workshops, among other activities.

Almontaser's influence over public education in New York City will likely only increase with the inauguration of Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, who you endorsed for election as Mayor. Mayor-

³¹ "The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)," *The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)*, accessed October 14, 2025. (<https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/council-american-islamic-relations-cair>)

³² Checkbook NYC, New York City Comptroller, accessed in September 2025. (https://www.checkbooknyc.com/smart_search/citywide?search_term=!*domain=contracts!*vendor_name=bridging%2Bcultures%2Bgroup%2Binc)

³³ Checkbook NYC, New York City Comptroller, accessed in September 2025. (https://www.checkbooknyc.com/smart_search/citywide?search_term=!*vendor_name=muslim%2Bcommunity%2Bnetwork)

³⁴ Sharon Otterman, "Muslims in New York City Unite on Push to Add Holidays to School Calendar," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2014. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/18/nyregion/muslims-in-new-york-city-unite-on-push-to-add-holidays-to-school-calendar.html>)

³⁵ New York City Council, Press Release, "NYC Council Adopts Hanif's Resolution 95, Advancing Religious Diversity Education in NYC Public Schools," November 13, 2024. (<https://council.nyc.gov/shahana-hanif/2024/11/13/nyc-council-adopts-hanifs-resolution-95-advancing-religious-diversity-education-in-nyc-public-schools/>)

³⁶ Expense Funding Requests, New York City Council, accessed in September 2025. (https://rnd.council.nyc.gov/expense_funding/)

elect Mamdani recently appointed Almontaser to his transition team as a member of the Committee on Immigrant Justice.³⁷ Mamdani's alignment with Almontaser's views reflects his own background supporting radical anti-Israel campus activism both prior to and during his career in public service.³⁸

Given that both federal and state taxpayer funds contribute to New York City's education budget, it is incumbent on both the federal and state government to ensure that the city's students are not being influenced by the agendas of malign foreign or domestic actors and that taxpayer funds are instead supporting students' core educational development as intended. Given these facts, we believe that it is incumbent upon you to initiate an investigation into these matters at the state level as the House Oversight Committee has already done at the federal level.

To assist Congress' oversight of this matter, we request the following information as soon as possible:

1. All contracts between Qatar Foundation International, known as QFI, regarding Arabic language classes at P.S. 261, P.S./I.S.30 and any other public K-12 schools throughout New York City, for all school years available starting from 2010 up through the current 2025-2026 school year;
2. Copies of all current and previously used curricula, lesson plans and teaching materials created using QFI funds, and/or under the direction or guidance of QFI, used at P.S. 261, P.S./I.S. 30, and any other public K-12 schools throughout New York City that has received QFI funding;
3. Copies of all Bridging Cultures teaching materials used by any employee of the City of New York during the following Bridging Cultures workshops: How to Teach about 9/11 in our Multicultural Classrooms: Building Understanding and Compassion; Valuing and Celebrating Our Religious Diversity through Religious Literacy; Culturally Sensitive Up-Stander Training; Building Compassionate Learning Communities Through Culturally Responsive Education;
4. Copies of Bridging Cultures training materials for its Courageous Conversations training program and its Meeting the Moment- Train the Trainers workshops about how to teach the Hamas attacks on October 7th, 2023 and the subsequent Israel-Hamas war in Gaza;
5. Copies of all Muslim Community Network training materials, lesson plans and teaching materials used at any workshops or trainings attended by employees of NYC Department

³⁷ Office of Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, Press Release, "Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani Announces Transition Committee Appointments to Advance His Affordability Agenda," November 24, 2025. (<https://bricartsmedia.org/about/news/press-release/mayor-elect-zohran-mamdani-announces-transition-committee-appointments-to-advance-his-affordability-agenda/>)

³⁸ Nicholas Fandos, "How Zohran Mamdani Came to Embrace the Palestinian Cause," *The New York Times*, October 8, 2025. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/08/nyregion/zohran-mamdani-israel-palestine.html>)

of Education, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, and/or, used at any city-funded workshops or trainings; and,

6. Copies of curriculum, lesson plans and all teaching materials being used in response to the Resolution 95 mandate.

We respectfully request that you work with the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Education to investigate the following:

1. Why has the New York City Department of Education allowed QFI to fund teachers' salaries, curricula, and teaching materials in at least two Brooklyn public schools?
2. Why do the New York City Department of Education and other city agencies partner with Bridging Cultures and Muslim Community Network despite their fraught histories surrounding the September 11, 2001, terror attacks and the Hamas-led massacre on October 7, 2023, in Israel?
3. How the New York City Department of Education is implementing Resolution 95 which mandates classes on religious diversity, and what exactly is being taught to school children?
4. How is the NYC DOE ensuring that all the city's major religions are factually represented throughout the curricula, and lesson plans are not being developed by fringe or far-left religious groups? Is the NYC DOE paying for lesson plans and teaching materials for teachers to use in the classroom? Or are religious organizations providing it without outside vetting?

We look forward to your response. The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. To arrange for delivery of documents, or to ask any related follow up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Majority staff at (202) 225-5074.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elise M. Stefanik
Chairwoman
House Republican Leadership



James Comer
Chairman
House Committee on Oversight
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