



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

GEORGE LEVENTHAL
COUNCILMEMBER
AT-LARGE

May 23, 2012

Dr. Joshua Starr, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools

Ms. Shirley Brandman
President, Montgomery County Board of Education
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. *Josh,* and Ms. *Shirley,* Brandman:

I urge you to provide two school closing days each school year in order for American Muslim members of our school community to observe Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitr, the two most significant religious holidays in the Muslim calendar. As you know, current MCPS policy provides that these two holidays are designated as non-testing days, and Muslim students are granted excused absences.

These are the only two major celebratory holidays in the Muslim calendar. Muslims typically start the day off with a communal prayer, then spend the rest of the day visiting and feasting with family and friends. Already many parents keep their children home from school on these two days.

I'm sure that you are aware that the size of the Muslim community in Montgomery County and in MCPS is significant. Thousands of our neighbors fill mosques throughout the county for religious observance, and deserve the same recognition of their most sacred holidays that other faiths enjoy.

While the dates of Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitr are based on the Islamic lunar calendar and change each year, they are established well in advance of the time that the Board of Education sets the school calendar each year. The dates for the two holidays have already been established through the end of 2014.

Former State Delegate Saqib Ali has provided me with the following websites which identify the upcoming dates, as approved by the Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA). The opinions and positions of the FCNA are widely respected and followed by many/most American Mosques. Both the Islamic Center of Maryland and the Muslim Community Center, the two largest mosques in Montgomery County, follow the FCNA's ruling on this matter.

- <http://moonsighting.com/calendars/2012fcna.html>
- <http://moonsighting.com/calendars/2013fcna.html>
- <http://moonsighting.com/calendars/2014fcna.html>

I hope you agree that fairness, respect and inclusion dictate that schools be closed on these two important holidays.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George".

George L. Leventhal
Councilmember

cc: All Councilmembers