Portland Board of Public Education
Resolution condemning violence and hate speech, expressing support for our Muslim students and staff

WHEREAS, the United States was founded by immigrants, many fleeing religious persecution, who enshrined freedom of religion as one of our nation's fundamental legal and ethical principles; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 850 students in Portland Public Schools whose families come from predominantly Muslim countries, who contribute in numerous ways to the vitality of the learning environment, and whose parents form an integral part of their school communities; and

WHEREAS, the Board does not condone discrimination because of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, religion, ancestry or national origin, age, disability, genetic information, political or economic status; and

WHEREAS, Portland's Jewish Community Alliance center, which runs a preschool and food pantry, was targeted with a bomb threat and anti-semitic speech on January 18th, 2017; and

WHEREAS, four Casco Bay High School students were targeted with derogatory and racist statements, and physically attacked on January 27th, 2017; and

WHEREAS, Arab and Muslim Americans, and those perceived as Muslims, are frequently the targets of abusive and discriminatory practices; and

WHEREAS, the recent escalation of hateful rhetoric against Muslims, those perceived as Muslims, immigrants, people of color and other religious minorities is especially harmful to children and our school community, as it has a negative impact on their psychological well-being, the health of their peer relationships, and their ability to thrive in the classroom; and

WHEREAS Muslims, and those perceived as Muslims, across the country have reported instances of bullying and disproportionate school discipline on account of their religion and/or race; and

WHEREAS providing a safe school environment that ensures both the physical and emotional safety of students and staff creates the conditions necessary to foster academic achievement; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of schools to educate students about the social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the United States, to promote awareness of a wide range of religious and cultural traditions, and to teach students to think critically about their own biases; and

WHEREAS, the Portland Board of Public Education has a responsibility to ensure that all are supported in their academic and personal development:

Now therefore be it resolved, that the Portland Public Schools –

1. Condemns all hateful speech and violent action directed at Muslims, those perceived as Muslims, immigrants, people of color, and members of all protected classes; and

2. Commits to fostering a school environment that promotes respect for and curiosity about all religions and cultures, affirms the equal humanity of all members of the community, and rejects all forms of bullying and discrimination; and
3. Commits to instituting school policies, setting an educational curriculum that reflects the values of
tolerance and inclusion in our schools, and utilizing diverse resources to support student learning; and

4. Commits to safe spaces to address bullying and harassment at school and community; and

5. Commits to engaging, encouraging, and equipping our educators, staff, and board to address difficult issues
around race, discrimination, and religious intolerance.

Legal Effect: This resolution expresses the sentiment of the board but does not have the force of policy or rule by itself. The Superintendent will work with legal counsel to identify any new policies or rules that should be developed and existing policies or rules that should be modified based on the expressed intent of this resolution.