

RESOLUTION NO. RS2020-____

A Resolution calling on the National Federation of State High School Associations and the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association to amend its rule relative to head coverings.

WHEREAS, on September 15 of this year, Najah Aqeel, a freshman at Valor College Prep in Nashville, was preparing to participate in a volleyball match; and

WHEREAS, before the game started, a referee told Najah and a coach that the hijab she wears violated the rules set by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS); and

WHEREAS, Najah was disqualified from the game for wearing a head covering. The rule restricts the types of headwear that can be worn by student athletes, even if worn for religious reasons; and

WHEREAS, this rule, enforced locally by the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA), unfairly targets Muslim students who wear head coverings by requiring them to obtain special permission before they are allowed to participate in certain sporting events; and

WHEREAS, not only is this rule discriminatory, it has been selectively enforced. Valor College Prep had not been made aware of the rule in its three years as a TSSAA member school and other student athletes at the school who wear head coverings had never had an issue during a game; and

WHEREAS, Valor College Prep has requested and received a waiver from TSSAA so that in the future, all student athletes who wear head coverings for religious reasons will be able to participate in their chosen sport; and

WHEREAS, despite this, this rule should still be changed. Students who wear head coverings for religious reasons should not be required to obtain a waiver before they are allowed to participate in school sports. Requiring a waiver puts an extra burden on these students; and

WHEREAS, disqualification of students under this rule discriminates against those who choose to wear a head covering for religious reasons, and leads to shame and embarrassment when they are told they must sit out due to their religious convictions; and

WHEREAS, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees the right to freely exercise one's religion. That includes wearing religious garments such as head coverings; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Council calls on NFHS and TSSAA to amend this rule to allow for all students to participate in high school sports, regardless of their religious beliefs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan County Council hereby calls on the National Federation of State High School Associations and the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association to amend its uniform rule relative to head coverings.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

SPONSORED BY:

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