



Participating Organizations

Alexandria for Palestine
Alliance of Baptists—Justice for
Palestine and Israel
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination
Committee
American Muslims for Palestine
Appalachian Peace Education
Center
Arab American Association of
Central Virginia
Central Atlantic Conference (UCC)
Palestine/Israel Network
Defenders for Freedom, Justice,
and Equality
Episcopal Peace Fellowship—
National Capital Regional Chapter
Hampton Roads For Palestine
Here4TheKids
Israel Palestine Mission Network
of the Presbyterian Church—USA
Jewish Voice for Peace
Muslims for Just Futures
National Arab American Women's
Association
New Dominion PAC
Northern Virginians for Peace &
Justice
Palestinian Christian Alliance for
Peace
Plowshares Peace & Justice Center
Richmonders for Peace in Israel—
Palestine
Unitarian Universalists for Justice
in the Middle East—Northern
Virginia Chapter
United Methodists for Kairos
Response
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
Virginia Muslim Civic League
Washington Interfaith Alliance for
Middle East Peace

July 28, 2025

The Honorable Senator Ghazala Hashmi
Chair, Educational and Health Committee
General Assembly Building
201 N. 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: Incorporation of Edits in SOLs and Instructional Guides

Dear Senator Ghazala Hashmi,

The Virginia Coalition for Human Rights (VCHR) and its affiliate organizations are concerned by the omission of critical, evidence-based facts about Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) history and by the omission of Arab American history in the current History and Social Sciences Standards of Learning (SOL) and its accompanying Instructional Guides. These omissions may undermine the inclusive goals outlined in § 22.1-208.02 of the Code of Virginia, which explicitly call for the inclusion of “untold histories of other groups historically underrepresented in American and world history.” We are particularly concerned by these omissions because the VCHR Education Committee, along with eight Virginia-based academicians, spent extensive time reviewing the SOLs—after which we submitted to the Virginia Board of Education a 10-page report on January 27, 2023. We are disappointed that little of our hard work is reflected in the SOLs adopted in 2023 and in the recently published Instructional Guides.

VCHR believes that including accurate and non-biased information about MENA in Virginia's curricula is essential for providing students with a well-rounded, globally relevant education. The MENA region has shaped world civilizations through its contributions to science, mathematics, literature, philosophy, religion, and political thought—foundations that continue to influence the modern world. Teaching this history fosters deeper cultural understanding, counters harmful stereotypes, and reflects the rich heritage of many students and families in Virginia's increasingly diverse classrooms. By integrating MENA narratives alongside those of other world regions and by incorporating Arab American history in curricula, educators can offer students a more accurate, inclusive view of history that empowers all learners to see their place in it.

Examples of Omissions:

We note only one mention of Palestine as part of the term “British Mandate of Palestine”, and “Palestinians” are completely absent from the SOLs and the Instructional Guides— even though the history of Palestine is critical to understanding the modern Middle East. Furthermore, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is not included under

Revolutionary Movements (WHII.10b), and the ongoing genocide in Gaza is not listed in the Genocide substandard (WHII.12a).

Similarly, there is no mention of Arab immigration to the United States or Arab American migration to Virginia—even though Virginia is home to the tenth largest community of Arab Americans. Also omitted are Arab American civic movements, leaders, communities, and accomplishments in the social, cultural, and economic fields.

Request to Incorporate Fact-Based Information in Virginia's curricula:

In order to correct the above-mentioned omissions, VCHR has reviewed the Instructional Guides and has suggested new edits. We ask that the Virginia Board of Education incorporate into the K-12 curriculum these new edits on MENA history and on the Arab American experience. These new edits provide much needed background information that contextualizes pivotal regional events—thereby supporting the VDOE-required social science skill of utilizing causal explanation to attain historical understanding. Incorporation of VCHR edits would, also, support Virginia's legal and educational mandate to strengthen culturally relevant education practices and to support anti-bias education.

Request to Fund Arab American History Education:

In order to mitigate this situation, VCHR, in partnership with the VDOE, would like to create model curricula, tools, and resources to support local school divisions in the instruction of Arab American history, including the history of Virginians of Arab descent. This partnership and initiative would be similar to the Asian American History Education initiative that was funded through HB30 by members of the 2024 session of the General Assembly.

Request to Work with VDOE to Improve Instructional Guides:

In addition to creating model curricula, VCHR wishes to work with the VDOE to amend the Instructional Guides. We ask for your help in doing so.

Sincerely yours,

Virginia Coalition for Human Rights



Nancy Wein, Co-Chair



Paul Noursi, Co-Chair

Attachment:

- “Edits to History and Social Science SOLs and Instructional Guidelines (Grades 5-12),” VCHR, June 27, 2025.