

MAUT Executive Committee Statement on Proposed Bill 21 To Follow Herewith

Unity Statement on Bill 21 – April 15, 2019

Recently, the Government of Quebec adopted a deeply troubling law under the guise of secularism that would prohibit certain Quebecers of faith from participating in public life and in the public sector. The academic community has long been a bastion of diversity and free thought. Pluralism enriches our communities and makes Quebec a more prosperous and welcoming place to live. As the associations and labour unions representing the whole of the McGill Community, we stand together against this divisive law which attacks civil liberties.

Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill

Association of McGill University Support Employees

Association of McGill University Research Employees

McGill Association of University Teachers

McGill's Association of Continuing Education Students

McGill Course Lecturers & Instructors Union

McGill University Non-Academic Certified Association

McGill University Non-Academic Staff Association

Post Graduate Students' Society

Service Employees' Union

Students' Society of McGill University

April 5, 2019

The Honourable François Legault
Office of the Premier
Édifice Honore-Mercier, 3e étage
835, René-Lévesque est
Québec (Québec) G1A 1B4

Dear Premier Legault,

I write to you on behalf of the Executive Committee of the McGill Association of University Teachers (MAUT) in response to the *Projet de loi n° 21* which your government submitted to the *Assemblée nationale* on Thursday, March 28, 2019.

Respect for diversity is essential to the healthy functioning of the McGill University community and Québec society as a whole. In our view, the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms already ensures religious neutrality by protecting the dignity of our citizens and public employees and their fundamental right to religious expression. The proposed new rules with respect to the wearing of religious symbols such as the kippa, the hijab, the niqab, the burka, and the turban violate their rights. The proposed new law which requires that governmental services, including education, must be given and received with the face uncovered is also discriminatory.

The proposed affirmation of a certain view of the religious neutrality of the state will, in fact, diminish the protection it affords to the rights of those in religious minorities and thereby, the religious neutrality of the state. In our view, the proposed law does the exact opposite of what it purports to do. It is precisely by allowing public employees to wear the symbols of their various religions while exercising their official duties *without regard to the religious affiliation of the citizens they serve* that the secular character of the Quebec state will be secured. What matters is how our public employees serve our citizens rather than what those public employees look like.

For these reasons, MAUT strongly opposes the adoption of the proposed law and urges the provincial government and the *Assemblée nationale* to reconsider this ill-conceived attempt to ensure the secular character of the province's public sector by banning the wearing of religious symbols by its employees.

Yours respectfully,



Axel van den Berg
President, MAUT