Upholding the civil liberties and civil rights of Iranian Americans and condemning bigotry, violence, and discrimination.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BLUMENTHAL submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on

RESOLUTION

Upholding the civil liberties and civil rights of Iranian Americans and condemning bigotry, violence, and discrimination.

Whereas Iranian Americans serve as government officials, in the military, and in law enforcement, working to uphold the Constitution of the United States and to protect all people of the United States;

Whereas Iranian Americans uphold democratic values and believe in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the pillars of the United States;

Whereas Iranian Americans are vibrant, peaceful, and law-abiding people, including people of the Baha’i, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Zoroastrian faiths and people who are nonreligious;
Whereas Iranian Americans have contributed greatly to the social and economic fabric of the society of the United States;

Whereas, according to the Small Business Administration, Iranian Americans are among the immigrant groups with the highest rates of business ownership in the United States;

Whereas Iranian Americans are award-winning artists, scientists, and athletes;

Whereas the United States condemns acts of bigotry, violence, and discrimination;

Whereas, in January 2020, dozens of Iranian Americans were detained for several hours at the Peace Arch border crossing in the State of Washington based on their ethnicity or national origin;

Whereas a directive was published appearing to show that the Seattle Field Office of U.S. Customs and Border Protection directed border patrol agents to target Iranian, Lebanese, and Palestinian nationals born between 1961 and 2001 for additional vetting;

Whereas U.S. Customs and Border Protection initially denied that there was any directive ordering the detainment of Iranian Americans;

Whereas many Iranian Americans have been deeply shaken by the discriminatory treatment of Iranian Americans at the border, with some members of the Iranian-American community stating that they will not travel outside of the United States for fear of being unfairly targeted based on their national heritage;

Whereas the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties of the Department of Homeland Security has opened an inves-
tigation into the detention of Iranian Americans at the border;

Whereas the United States Commission on Civil Rights, originally established by part I of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 (Public Law 85–315; 71 Stat. 634) and reestablished by the Civil Rights Commission Act of 1983 (42 U.S.C. 1975 et seq.), said that the Commission “expresses deep concern over the treatment of Iranians and Iranian Americans in airports, and calls on the Department of Homeland Security to take all necessary steps immediately to ensure equitable treatment of all people at America’s borders”;

Whereas, in a 2018 survey commissioned by the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans, 49 percent of Iranian Americans said that they had personally experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity or national origin;

Whereas the 2019 hate crime statistics published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation reveal that the most common bias motivation of single-bias incidents is race, ethnicity, or ancestry bias, representing 59.6 percent of all single-bias incidents; and

Whereas Iranian Americans have long faced discrimination in times of turbulence in the relationship between the United States and Iran:

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

1 (1) condemns bigotry and acts of violence or
discrimination against any person in the United
States, including Iranian Americans;
(2) declares that government leaders and law enforcement personnel should ensure that the civil rights and civil liberties of all people of the United States, including Iranian Americans, are fully protected;

(3) encourages local, State, and Federal elected officials to engage with Iranian Americans and encourage Iranian Americans to share their experiences with their communities—

(A) to end stereotypes;

(B) to correct misconceptions; and

(C) to convey instances of abuse against the Iranian-American community;

(4) calls upon local, State, and Federal law enforcement authorities to investigate and vigorously prosecute crimes committed against all people of the United States, including Iranian Americans, that are based on actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, or ethnicity;

(5) urges the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties of the Department of Homeland Security to carry out a thorough and timely investigation into the detentions of Iranian Americans at the border; and
(6) calls on the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to immediately halt any orders that encourage discrimination on the basis of nationality or religion, including those targeting individuals of Iranian heritage.