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Senator Luz Escamilla to Pursue Legislative Action Following Anti-Muslim Hate-Motivated Attack

SALT LAKE CITY — Following a community town hall on July 22, 2026, at the Utah Islamic Center, Senate Minority Leader Luz Escamilla called for renewed action to strengthen Utah's response to hate-motivated crimes. The town hall convened community members and heard from Syed Sohail, who was recently released from the hospital after surviving a religiously motivated stabbing attack.

The attack occurred in Senator Escamilla's district at Valley Fair Mall in West Valley City. Prosecutors have charged the suspect with attempted aggravated murder. The suspect has [testified](#) that he targeted Sohail because he is Muslim and was hoping to inspire others to kill as many Muslims as possible.

"This attack happened in my district, just minutes from where I live. It impacts all of us," said Senator Escamilla. "Today it was Mr. Sohail and the Muslim community. Tomorrow it could be any one of us; that's something we all need to acknowledge, that it is closer than we sometimes think it is."

Escamilla thanked Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill and his office for their work in pursuing charges and for recognizing the seriousness of an attack allegedly motivated by religious hatred.

During the town hall, community members shared their experiences with discrimination and fear. Escamilla said those stories reinforce that responding to hate requires more than words of support.

"Saying the right things after these tragedies has not been enough for a long time," Escamilla said. "It's time for us to come together and have an honest conversation about what policies Utah needs to ensure people are safe from hate-motivated crimes and that law enforcement has the tools necessary to investigate, prosecute, and seek justice when these crimes occur."

Escamilla announced she has opened several bill files for the 2027 General Session and will work with colleagues, law enforcement, and community leaders on legislation addressing

hate-motivated crimes, including improving how these crimes are identified and tracked to better inform public policy.

The Senator also reflected on her longstanding relationships with faith communities across her district, including the Wat Lao Temple, which has experienced acts of vandalism and violence in recent years.

"Religion is deeply important to me," Escamilla said. "I've stood with communities that have experienced hatred and violence simply because of their faith. Freedom of religion, and freedom from religion, is one of the most fundamental principles of our country. No one should have to fear violence because of what they believe."

Escamilla also expressed concern that the attack has not received the level of public attention it deserves.

"When violence is motivated by hatred toward someone's faith, every community should care," she said. "We cannot allow bias or indifference to determine which victims receive our attention and which do not."

Closing the gathering, Escamilla spoke emotionally about the broader impact of hate crimes.

"A hate crime never affects only one victim. It leaves an entire community wondering whether they are safe to worship, work, or simply exist as themselves," she said. "How do we explain to our children that we allowed this to happen in our state?"

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