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October 15, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

I wanted to write a letter in support of the Alavi Foundation. My husband and our two children attend services at the Islamic Institute of New York and have for several years now. To whomever is reading this letter and trying to assess the tremendous value to the community that institutions supported financially by the Alavi Foundation provide, please read on.

Places that are financed and supported by the Alavi Foundation provide immigrant families a place to connect to one another and to have a positive experience of life in America. By providing opportunities and occasions to embrace their heritage, they further their love for America. Let me explain.

^{patrons!}

I am not Persian. I am actually half-Bangladeshi and half-Caucasian American. I was born in Houston, Texas and grew up in a poor suburb where I did not fit into any category of "normal" for the people around me. I was an "other". I never knew any other Bangladeshis in my community. I never met other children of mixed American and South Asian heritage. I felt like I did not belong. That became my identity: an outsider, an other. I lacked self-confidence and connection to my home place. It led me down a dark and troubled path. Coming to New York, I found a place that was full of people like me and I found an entire city that celebrates its heritage and its multi-cultural makeup.

Now I am married to a Persian man and we have two beautiful sons that are half-Persian. Though it is difficult to get there, I do my best to bring them to the cultural events and activities held at IINY. This is their chance to get to interact and meet other Persian American families, families like ours, a chance to learn about their heritage, celebrate Persian New Year and honor Persian saints. It's a chance for them and all the children there to feel that they can be proud of their immigrant background, proud of their families for making it to America and becoming part of the immigrant fabric of this country. More importantly, they can see that there is a place in America just for people like them.

I have never had to pay for any activity we participated in at IINY. At every event, there is always food served for the attendants. Alavi Foundation has made this possible. Though our family could afford an entrance fee or to pay for our meals, I know there are many families in attendance that cannot.

By providing a space, free food and activities, Alavi Foundation is doing so much service for this immigrant community and for America at large. We all have seen the damage