

Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Application

Submitted on	12 February 2025, 4:54PM
Receipt number	90
Related form version	10

I am interested in serving on the Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs. By checking this box I am affirming that I understand this appointment will be a 2-3 year commitment.	Yes, I understand
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I understand that this document will be a public record and any information I provide could be subject to release upon request.	Yes, I understand
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Date of application	02/10/2025
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Contact Information

Full name	Sara Abou Rashed
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Phonetic pronunciation	Say-rah A-boo Ra-shED
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Gender	Female
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Pronouns	she/her
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Email address	sara.abou99@gmail.com
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Phone number	614-817-5073
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Indicate home, work, mobile for primary number	Mobile
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Secondary phone number	
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Indicate home, work, mobile for secondary number	
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If you have a social media presence (Instagram, Facebook, X, Tiktok, LinkedIn, etc.) please share the best way to find you	https://www.linkedin.com/in/sara-abou-rashed-2297b6152 also present on Instagram, Facebook and X
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Residential street address	1145 Francisco Rd
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City	Columbus
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Zip code	43220
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How many years have you lived in the City of Columbus?	12
What district of the City of Columbus do you live in? (1-9 or outside of city limits)	3
Age	18-25

Personal Information

Country of origin (or country of origin of your parents, if applicable)	Born in Syria to Palestinian parents
How long have you lived in the US? (date of arrival)	07/04/2013
What immigrant group or groups do you represent?	Arabs, Arab Americans Muslims, Palestinians, Syrians, Middle Easterns
What languages do you speak and rate your fluency in each (basic, conversational, fluent, or proficient)	Native fluency in English and Arabic Proficient in French
Do you identify as one of the following: Immigrant (a person who has come to a country that is not their own in order to live there permanently), Refugee (a person who has come to a country that is not their own to avoid persecution in their country of origin), First-Generation (children of foreign-born parents)	Yes
Ethnicity and race (please check all that apply)	Other: Middle Eastern
Occupation (if retired, please share former occupation)	Currently, I am the Communications and Community Outreach coordinator for CAIR-OHIO (Council on American-Islamic Relations). I am also a writer and public speaker on immigration and the power of stories. I hold an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Michigan and have previously worked as a writing instructor at multiple higher ed institutions.
Do you identify with any of the following affinity groups?	Not applicable

Questionnaire

Why are you interested in serving on this commission? (maximum 250 words)	<p>This commission for me is a chance to engage in direct, open dialogue with our elected officials when it comes to challenges and updates on immigrant, refugee and new American communities in Central Ohio. I'm interested in bridging the gap between my Arab community and local government as there's a huge disconnect, even a mistrust, that elected officials do not have the best interest of immigrant and refugees in mind. For this reason, I am most grateful for this initiative to dispel myths, communicate the latest and verified information, mobilize and ensure that we're all on the same side at this heightened moment in time given the current administration. Personally, I have held multiple roles as a connector and ambassador between communities and I see it as a responsibility to represent my community as well as serve them where possible. I'm committed to efforts of unity, representation and collaboration and wish to see my community invited to this timely conversation. As a young writer and communications professional, I also see this as an opportunity to learn more about local government and grow my skills and capacity to serve Columbus and Ohio at large in the future as well.</p>
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What do you hope the commission will accomplish in the short term and long term? (maximum 250 words)

I am hopeful that the commission will be the first responder to local crises when it comes to refugees and immigrants. Our priority must be to engage multiple community leaders, organizations, and even service-providers to ensure local policies are as inclusive as can be. While we navigate federal pressure, I see this as an opportunity to tailor our local response to Columbus's needs and to set preventive acts in motion. In the short term, I see that there's increased responsibility on our City Council to advocate for policies and pass legislature committed to the welfare of immigrants and local constituents at large. I also see that we must increase education on immigration related policies and prepare community members to advocate for themselves through workshops, educational sessions and translated materials. We can also establish a task force delegating assignments per community members and organizations' expertise. In the long term, I hope Columbus maintains its reputation as an exceptionally welcoming city and flourishes by the inclusion of immigrants rather than their ostracization.

Please describe and share relevant activities and accomplishments that relate to the community that you represent (maximum 250 words)

I am extremely active in my Arab community, frequently engaged in educational and advocacy efforts as well as involved in multiple organizations. I am a board member of Arab Americans of Central Ohio as well as a board member and communications and outreach chair of the newly established local nonprofit, Baladna: Palestine Society of Columbus. Through Baladna, we have been engaged in efforts to educate the community on Palestine as well as to preserve the culture, history and heritage by mobilizing the Palestinian community and responding to its concerns. We have held multiple events and run several programs for kids, teens, and adults. I am confident that my role in the Arab American community will serve as a catalyst for further engagement with the local government, establishing an avenue for more representation, empowerment, and collaboration with community leaders.

List any experience that would assist you in serving on this commission (maximum 250 words)

As a writer and public speaker, I am excited about engaging my creativity in service of the immigrant and refugee communities. A few years after my arrival to the US, I wrote and performed a one-woman show titled, A Map of Myself, which narrates my family's displacement journey. I believe in the power of words and particularly the arts to shed light on important and difficult societal conversations. Often, I have been called to perform my poetry on immigration, youth and women's empowerment. One of my favorite performances has been through the Welcoming City campaign when the refugee doll Amal visited Columbus. Moreover, my role as Communications Coordinator at CAIR-Ohio is another platform for engaging the Muslim community in Central Ohio and has equipped me with the skills and tools necessary to communicate among different stakeholders. I have also previously interned with City Council through the Northwest Association and held teaching positions at CCAD, OSU and the McConnell Arts Center. My language skills in Arabic as well as my abilities in translation, writing, public speaking, facilitation and community outreach will be particularly relevant to service on this commission.

Are you related to any elected City official or city staff member? If yes, please explain.

No.

Do you or any of your family members work for or serve on the board of directors of any organization which has contracted with or applied for funding from the City of Columbus? Do you anticipate any involvement of this kind in the future? If yes, please describe the relationship.

No.

Please indicate any activities you are involved with that may present a conflict of interest with the commission applying for.

None.

References

Reference #1	Mazen Rasoul
Relation #1	Fellow board member at Baladna: Palestine Society of Columbus
Phone number #1	614-843-2473
Email #1	rasoul.esq@gmail.com
Reference #2	Guadalupe Velasquez
Relation #2	professional connection in Columbus
Phone number #2	614-747-2145
Email #2	gavelasquez@welcomingcity.com
By filling out the reference section, I hereby authorize the City of Columbus to conduct a reference check by contacting the individuals listed above. As a reminder, this document is subject to public records requests.	Yes

Resume & Letters of Reference

Optional: Please attach your resume and any letters of reference here. If you plan on mailing this form please remember to attach a copy of your resume and any letters of reference.

[AbouRashed_Resume_25.pdf](#)