

May 28, 2019

# Sikh Bus Supervisor Reaches Settlement with Maryland Public School District

## For Immediate Release

**Primary Press Contact:** Harkeet Singh  
Sikh Coalition Media & Communications Manager  
[Media@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:Media@sikhcoalition.org), 925-315-7872

**Secondary Press Contact:** Aidan O'Shea  
Public Justice Deputy Communications Director  
[aoshea@publicjustice.net](mailto:aoshea@publicjustice.net), (202) 861-5240

## Sikh Bus Supervisor Reaches Settlement with Maryland Public School District

May 28, 2019 (Rockville, Maryland) - After nearly a decade of enduring racial and religious harassment in the workplace, Sawinder Singh, a 45-year-old observant Sikh American bus supervisor, successfully [settled a multi-year dispute](#) today with the Montgomery County Public School District (MCPS) with the help of attorneys from the [Sikh Coalition](#) and [Public Justice](#).

Mr. Singh, who maintains his Sikh articles of faith, including a turban and unshorn hair, was hired as a bus driver by MCPS in 2006. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Singh routinely encountered racial and religious harassment from students and colleagues, including some supervisors. The relentless insults of Mr. Singh and his articles of faith included threats to cut his hair and references to “Osama bin Laden,” “al Qaeda” and the “Taliban.” In one instance, after the news announcement of bin Laden’s death, a former colleague said, “How did they let you back in the country? Osama bin Laden was killed.”

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, MCPS will work with the Sikh Coalition and Public Justice to develop a working group to review and consider changes to MCPS’ current training initiatives, along with staff and student feedback on school and workplace climate, with a goal of improving cultural competencies, including Sikh awareness.

“After years of harassment in the workplace, I am grateful that MCPS has worked with me to resolve these issues and prioritize making the work environment safer and

more inclusive for all,” said Mr. Singh. “My hope is that through this process, every MCPS employee can gain a deeper respect for Sikhs and other religious minorities.”

Mr. Singh endured the harassment, in some cases without complaint, at MCPS because, as a new immigrant when he was hired, he sought the stability and security of working for a government agency that was close to his home in Clarksburg, MD. But when the continued harassment became unendurable for Mr. Singh, he contacted the Sikh Coalition for assistance. The Sikh Coalition [filed a complaint in 2016 with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#) on Mr. Singh’s behalf, and later joined co-counsel Public Justice to resolve Mr. Singh’s concerns with MCPS’ general counsel.

“No employee should have to deal with the years of racial and religious harassment that Mr. Singh endured,” said Amrith Kaur, Sikh Coalition Legal Director. “All employers must be held accountable for protecting their employees. We are encouraged that MCPS is now taking the necessary steps to create awareness programs that better foster safe and inclusive workplaces.”

Sikhs, who have been an integral part of the American workforce for 125 years, are religiously mandated to maintain articles of faith, including unshorn hair and turbans. An estimated 500,000 Sikhs live in the United States.

“Mr. Singh has been a dedicated member of the Montgomery County Schools community for more than a decade,” said Karla Gilbride, Cartwright-Baron Staff Attorney at Public Justice. “With today’s announcement, he has also provided the community with a teachable moment about the importance of respecting and ensuring equality in the workplace under the law.”

*The Sikh Coalition has represented Sikh clients in high profile employment discrimination cases for nearly 18 years. For more case information, including photographs or interviews with Mr. Singh and attorneys, please contact Harkeet Singh or Aidan O’Shea. For additional background information about the Sikh community, faith or traditions, please view our [Sikhism Reporter’s Guide](#).*