

CHAPTER 2017-74

Senate Bill No. 436

An act relating to religious expression in public schools; providing a short title; prohibiting a school district from discriminating against students, parents, or school personnel on the basis of religious viewpoints or expression; prohibiting penalty or reward for a student's religious expression in coursework, artwork, or other specified assignments; authorizing a student to wear clothing, accessories, and jewelry displaying religious messages or symbols; authorizing a student to pray or engage in religious activities or expression; authorizing a student to organize prayer groups, religious clubs, and other religious gatherings; prohibiting a school district from preventing school personnel from participating in voluntary, student-initiated religious activities on school grounds under specified circumstances; requiring a school district to comply with the federal requirements in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; requiring that a school district provide religious groups with equal access to school facilities; authorizing religious groups to advertise or announce meetings in the same manner and to the same extent as secular groups; requiring that a school district adopt a limited public forum policy and deliver a disclaimer at school events; requiring that the Department of Education develop and publish a model policy regarding a limited public forum and religious expression; requiring that each district school board adopt and implement such model policy; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Religious expression in public schools.—

(1) This section may be cited as the “Florida Student and School Personnel Religious Liberties Act.”

(2) A school district may not discriminate against a student, parent, or school personnel on the basis of a religious viewpoint or religious expression. A school district shall treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner that the school district treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular viewpoint.

(3)(a) A student may express his or her religious beliefs in coursework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination. A student's homework and classroom assignments shall be evaluated, regardless of their religious content, based on expected academic standards relating to the course curriculum and requirements. A student may not be penalized or rewarded based on the religious content of his or her work if the coursework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments require a student's viewpoint to be expressed.