

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to religious expression in public  
3           schools; amending s. 1002.20, F.S.; prohibiting  
4           penalty or reward for a student's religious expression  
5           in coursework, artwork, or other specified  
6           assignments; authorizing a student to wear jewelry  
7           displaying religious messages or symbols; authorizing  
8           a student to organize prayer groups, religious clubs,  
9           and other religious gatherings; authorizing religious  
10          groups to have equal access to school facilities;  
11          authorizing religious groups to advertise or announce  
12          meetings in the same manner and to the same extent as  
13          secular groups; authorizing the enforcement of such  
14          student rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration  
15          Act of 1998; amending s. 1002.205, F.S.; prohibiting a  
16          school district from preventing school personnel from  
17          participating in voluntary, student-initiated  
18          religious activities on school grounds under specified  
19          circumstances; authorizing the enforcement of the  
20          right to such participation under the Religious  
21          Freedom Restoration Act of 1998; providing an  
22          effective date.

23  
24   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
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26 Section 1. Subsection (25) is added to section 1002.20,  
27 Florida Statutes, to read:

28 1002.20 K-12 student and parent rights.—Parents of public  
29 school students must receive accurate and timely information  
30 regarding their child's academic progress and must be informed  
31 of ways they can help their child to succeed in school. K-12  
32 students and their parents are afforded numerous statutory  
33 rights including, but not limited to, the following:

34 (25) RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES.—

35 (a) Religious expression.—A student may express his or her  
36 religious beliefs in coursework, artwork, and other written and  
37 oral assignments free from discrimination. A student's homework  
38 and classroom assignments shall be evaluated, regardless of  
39 their religious content, based on expected academic standards  
40 relating to the course curriculum and requirements. A student  
41 may not be penalized or rewarded based on the religious content  
42 of his or her work if the coursework, artwork, or other written  
43 or oral assignments require a student's viewpoint to be  
44 expressed.

45 (b) Religious jewelry.—A student may wear jewelry that  
46 displays a religious message or symbol in the same manner and to  
47 the same extent that secular types of jewelry that display  
48 messages or symbols are permitted to be worn.

49 (c) Religious organization.—A student may organize prayer  
50 groups, religious clubs, and other religious gatherings before,

51 during, and after the school day in the same manner and to the  
52 same extent that a student is permitted to organize secular  
53 activities and groups. A religious group may be given access to  
54 the same school facilities for assembling as given to secular  
55 groups without discrimination based on the religious content of  
56 the group's expression. A group that meets for prayer or other  
57 religious speech may advertise or announce its meetings in the  
58 same manner and to the same extent that a secular group may  
59 advertise or announce its meetings.

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61 The rights as provided in this subsection may be enforced under  
62 chapter 761.

63 Section 2. Section 1002.205, Florida Statutes, is amended  
64 to read:

65 1002.205 Guidelines on religious expression;  
66 distribution.—The Department of Education shall each year  
67 distribute for informational purposes to all district school  
68 board members, district school superintendents, school  
69 principals, and teachers the entire guidelines on "Religious  
70 Expression in Public Schools" published by the United States  
71 Department of Education, as updated from time to time. In  
72 addition, a school district may not prevent school personnel  
73 from participating in religious activities on school grounds  
74 which are initiated by students at reasonable times before or  
75 after the school day if such activities are voluntary and do not

76 | conflict with the responsibilities or assignments of such  
77 | personnel. The rights as provided in this section may be  
78 | enforced under chapter 761.

79 | Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.