



National Association of Christian Lawmakers

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

2024-11 Released Time Education Programs – Rep Doug Bankson (FL)

1 Section 1. TITLE

2 This Act may be cited as the “[STATE] Released Time Education Act”.

3 SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS

4 (A) “Released time course” means a course in religious instruction taught by an
5 independent sponsoring entity and which a student is excused from school to
6 attend.

7 (B) “School district” means [CITE TO DEFINITION UNDER STATE LAW FOR
8 SCHOOL DISTRICT AND CHARTER SCHOOLS; NOTE THIS SHOULD NOT
9 APPLY TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS]

10 SECTION 3. RELEASED TIME EXCUSAL POLICIES

11 (A) Each school district shall adopt a policy that excuses any student under its
12 jurisdiction from school to attend a released time course for at least one (1) hour
13 per week [but not more than five (5) hours per week].

14 (B) The policy shall require that:

15 (1) The student’s parent or legal guardian gives written consent for the student
16 to attend the released time course;

17 (2) The entity sponsoring the released time course maintains attendance records
18 and makes them available to the school district the student attends;

19 (3) Transportation to and from the place of instruction, including transportation
20 for students with disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring
21 entity, parent, guardian, or student;

22 (4) The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and assumes liability for the
23 student while under the control of the sponsoring entity;

1 (5) No school district funds (other than *de minimis* administrative costs) are
2 expended in providing the released time course;

3 (6) Released time courses are not to be held on school property unless permitted
4 under a neutral policy of equal access opening school property for use by
5 community groups; and

6 (7) The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork.

7 (C) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, any period for which a student is
8 excused to attend a released time course shall be considered as the student
9 attending the school from which the student is excused for the purposes of
10 determining school funding and satisfying attendance requirements.

11 (D) Nothing in this Act shall be interpreted to deny a released time course or the
12 sponsoring entity equal access to funds, benefits, or services that the local school
13 system may provide or make available to community groups or other independent
14 entities.

15 **SECTION 4. CREDIT FOR RELEASED TIME COURSES**

16 (A) A school district shall adopt a policy that awards academic credit for the
17 completion of a released time course [and recognizes the credits of an
18 independently accredited provider of released time courses].

19 (B) In determining how much credit to award for completion of such a course, the
20 school district shall evaluate the course based on purely secular criteria that are
21 substantially the same criteria used to evaluate similar courses for purposes of
22 determining how much credit to award for such courses. The decision to award
23 credit for a released time course shall be neutral to, and shall not involve any test
24 for, religious content or denominational affiliation.

25 (C) For purposes of this section, secular criteria may include, but are not limited to,
26 the following:

27 (1) The number of hours of classroom instruction time;

28 (2) A review of the course syllabus that reflects course requirements and
29 materials used;

30 (3) The methods of assessment used in the course; and

31 (4) The qualifications of the course instructor, which shall be similar to the
32 qualifications of other teachers within the district.

1 **SECTION 5. REMEDIES**

2 Any person or organization aggrieved by a violation of this Act may bring an action
3 against the school district responsible for the violation and seek appropriate relief,
4 including, but not limited to, injunctive relief, monetary damages, reasonable
5 attorneys' fees, and court costs.

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