

## HB342 INTRODUCED



1 HB342  
2 BYMGRQ4-1  
3 By Representatives DuBose, Mooney, Stadthagen, Gidley, Colvin,  
4 Rigsby, Yarbrough, Shaw, Butler, Harrison, Standridge, Carns,  
5 Woods, Faulkner, Sellers, Paschal  
6 RFD: Education Policy  
7 First Read: 25-Feb-25



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SYNOPSIS:

Under existing law, the State Board of Education has a policy providing elective credit to students who attend religious instruction during the school day, and each local board of education may choose whether to implement the policy.

This bill would require each local board of education to adopt a policy allowing elective credit to students who are released from the classroom to attend religious instruction during the school day.

A BILL  
TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

Relating to public K-12 education; to amend Section 16-1-20.6, Code of Alabama 1975; to further provide for the provision of elective credit for students who attend religious instruction during the school day.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Section 16-1-20.6, Code of Alabama 1975, is amended to read as follows:

"§16-1-20.6

(a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the



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29 Alabama Released Time Credit Act.

30 (b) The Legislature finds and declares all of the  
31 following:

32 (1) That the United States Supreme Court, in its  
33 decision in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952), upheld the  
34 constitutionality of released time programs for religious  
35 instruction for public school students during the school day.

36 (2) That the United States Constitution and state law  
37 allows local school districts to offer religious released time  
38 education for the benefit of public school students.

39 (3) That the purpose of this section is to incorporate  
40 a constitutionally acceptable method of allowing school  
41 districts to offer released time classes and, in grades where  
42 credit is earned, to award students elective credit for  
43 classes taken during the school day in released time programs.

44 (c) As used in this section, the term released time  
45 means a period of time during the school day when a student is  
46 allowed to participate in an elective course in religious  
47 instruction, conducted off school district property, by a  
48 private entity.

49 (d) The State Board of Education shall adopt and each  
50 local board of education ~~may~~ shall implement a policy  
51 ~~for~~ allowing a student to attend released time as an elective  
52 course if all of the following are satisfied:

53 (1) The parent or guardian of the student gives written  
54 consent.

55 (2) The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records  
56 and makes them available to the public school the student



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57 attends.

58 (3) The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and  
59 assumes liability for the student who is excused for released  
60 time.

61 (4) No public funds are expended other than de minimis  
62 administrative costs.

63 (5) No public school personnel are involved in  
64 providing the religious instruction.

65 (e) In grades where credit is earned, a student who  
66 participates in released time ~~may~~ shall earn elective course  
67 credit for participation, as provided by rules adopted by the  
68 State Board of Education for elective courses. Credit awarded  
69 may not exceed normal credit given for an elective course in  
70 the particular school system. The State Board of Education  
71 shall also adopt minimum standards for class attendance  
72 necessary to qualify for credit.

73 (f) A student who participates in religious instruction  
74 for elective credit during released time shall be credited  
75 with time spent as if the student attended school, and the  
76 time shall be calculated as part of the actual school day.

77 (g) Transportation to and from the place of released  
78 time, including transportation for any student with  
79 disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring  
80 private entity, parent, guardian, or student and may not be  
81 arranged, coordinated, or provided for by public school  
82 personnel.

83 (h) No student may be released from a required core  
84 curriculum class to attend released time."



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85                   Section 2. This act shall become effective on July 1,  
86    2025.