



**House Education Policy Reported Substitute for
SB248**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

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 released time for 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 Alabama Released Time Credit Act.

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

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

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

(3) That the purpose of this section is to incorporate



House Education Policy Reported Substitute for SB248

29 a constitutionally acceptable method of allowing school
30 districts to ~~offer~~ accommodate religious released time classes
31 and, in grades where credit is earned, to award students
32 elective credit for classes taken during the school day in
33 released time programs.

34 (c) For the purposes of this ~~As used in this~~ section,
35 the following terms have the following meanings ~~term released~~
36 ~~time means a:~~

37 (1) RELEASED TIME. A period of time during the school
38 day when a student is allowed to participate in religious
39 released time instruction that is ~~an elective course in~~
40 ~~religious instruction,~~ conducted off school district property,
41 ~~by a private~~ and conducted by a sponsoring entity.

42 (2) SPONSORING ENTITY. A church or other local
43 community-based religious organization.

44 (d) (1) The State Board of Education and each local
45 board of education shall allow a parent or guardian to choose
46 for his or her student to attend a religious released time
47 program conducted by a sponsoring entity.

48 (2) Subdivision (1) shall not apply in either of the
49 following circumstances:

50 a. If a local board of education or the local
51 superintendent or designee of the local board of education has
52 a reasonable belief based on objective evidence that
53 permitting a student to attend a released time program would
54 pose a substantial risk of physical harm to the student or
55 that the sponsoring entity is in violation of state law in a
56 manner that poses a substantial risk of physical harm to a



House Education Policy Reported Substitute for SB248

57 student.

58 b. If the student's participation in religious released
59 time would cause the student to be excused from the minimum
60 instructional time for any course or subject as prescribed by
61 the State Board of Education, or from any student intervention
62 required under state or federal law, for purposes of
63 participating in religious released time.

64 (3) Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

65 a. Endorse any religious belief, practice, or
66 instruction by the State Board of Education or any local board
67 of education;

68 b. Limit the authority of local boards of education
69 over the development of school schedules; or

70 c. Limit the authority of local boards of education to
71 tailor the policies addressed in this section to meet their
72 specific needs, provided that the policy reflects the
73 requirements of this section and complies with applicable law,
74 rules, and regulations.

75 (e) The State Board of Education ~~shall adopt~~ and each
76 local board of education may ~~implement~~ adopt a policy for a
77 student to attend released time which may require that any of
78 ~~the following as an elective course if all of the following~~
79 ~~are~~ be satisfied by the sponsoring entity:

80 (1) The parent or guardian of the student gives written
81 consent for the student to participate in religious released
82 time and completes the local board of education's standard
83 checkout authorization form for the released time program. A
84 single completed authorization form shall apply for the full



House Education Policy Reported Substitute for SB248

85 duration of the school year and may not be required for each
86 individual released time session.

87 (2) Released time instruction and activities are not
88 sponsored by the local board of education and do not fall
89 under the supervision, control, or authority of the local
90 board of education or its employees.

91 (3) The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records
92 and makes them available to the public school the student
93 attends.

94 (4) ~~(3)~~ The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and
95 assumes liability for the student who is excused for released
96 time.

97 (5) ~~(4)~~ No public funds are expended other than de
98 minimis administrative costs.

99 (6) ~~(5)~~ No public school personnel are involved in
100 providing the religious instruction.

101 (7) The sponsoring entity conducts a criminal history
102 background check for all employees or contractors of the
103 entity who are likely to have direct, ongoing contact with a
104 student who is excused for released time.

105 (8) The student assumes responsibility for any missed
106 school work.

107 (f) ~~(e)~~ In grades where credit is earned, a student who
108 participates in released time may earn elective course credit
109 for participation, as provided by rules adopted by the State
110 Board of Education for elective courses. Credit awarded may
111 not exceed normal credit given for an elective course in the
112 particular school system. The State Board of Education shall



House Education Policy Reported Substitute for SB248

113 also adopt minimum standards for class attendance necessary to
114 qualify for credit.

115 (g) ~~(f)~~ A student who participates in religious
116 instruction for elective credit during released time shall be
117 credited with time spent as if the student attended school,
118 and the time shall be calculated as part of the actual school
119 day.

120 (h) ~~(g)~~ Transportation to and from the place of released
121 time, including transportation for any student with
122 disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring
123 private entity, parent, guardian, or student and may not be
124 arranged, coordinated, or provided for by public school
125 personnel.

126 ~~(h) No student may be released from a required core~~
127 ~~curriculum class to attend released time."~~

128 Section 2. This act shall become effective on July 1,
129 2026.