

HB 1628 - AS INTRODUCED

2026 SESSION

26-2949

07/09

HOUSE BILL **1628**

AN ACT requiring schools to provide excused absences for certain religious instruction, defining released time courses, and permitting schools to adopt policies and provide credit for released time courses.

SPONSORS: Rep. W. MacDonald, Rock. 16

COMMITTEE: Education Policy and Administration

ANALYSIS

This bill requires schools to provide excused absences for certain religious instruction, defining released time courses, and permitting schools to adopt policies and provide credit for released time courses.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

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

3 (g) The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork.

4 III. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, any period for which a student is
5 excused to attend a released time course shall be considered as the student attending the school from
6 which the student is excused for the purposes of determining school funding and satisfying
7 attendance requirements.

8 IV. Nothing in this subdivision shall be interpreted to deny a released time course or the
9 sponsoring entity equal access to funds, benefits, or services that the local school system may provide
10 or make available to community groups or other independent entities.

11 194:19-d Credit For Released Time Courses.

12 I. School districts shall adopt a policy that awards academic credit for the completion of a
13 released time course and recognizes the credits of an independently accredited provider of released
14 time courses.

15 II. In determining how much credit to award for completion of such a course, school districts
16 shall evaluate the course based on purely secular criteria that are substantially the same criteria
17 used to evaluate similar courses for purposes of determining how much credit to award for such
18 courses. The decision to award credit for a released time course shall be neutral to, and shall not
19 involve any test for, religious content or denominational affiliation.

20 III. For purposes of this section, secular criteria may include the following:

21 (a) The number of hours of classroom instruction time;

22 (b) A review of the course syllabus that reflects course requirements and materials used;

23 (c) The methods of assessment used in the course; and

24 (d) The qualifications of the course instructor.

25 194:19-e Remedies. Any person or organization aggrieved by a violation of this subdivision may
26 bring an action against the school district responsible for the violation and seek appropriate relief,
27 including injunctive relief, monetary damages, reasonable attorneys' fees, and court costs.

28 3 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.