

**ASSEMBLY, No. 5982**

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**219th LEGISLATURE**

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INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 15, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON**  
**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Requires Commissioner of Education to develop guidelines for school districts concerning students' right to wear articles of faith.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



1   **AN ACT** concerning the right to wear articles of faith in public  
2       schools and supplementing chapter 36 of Title 18A of the New  
3       Jersey Statues.

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5       **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*  
6       *of New Jersey:*

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8       1.   a.   The Commissioner of Education shall develop and  
9       distribute to school districts guidelines concerning a student's right  
10      to wear articles of faith. The purpose of the guidelines shall be to  
11      provide direction for schools in addressing common issues  
12      concerning the rights of students with respect to wearing articles of  
13      faith in school, and to assist school districts in establishing policies  
14      and procedures that ensure a supportive and nondiscriminatory  
15      environment for students of all religious faiths.

16      b.   The guidelines developed by the commissioner shall include,  
17      but not be limited to, information and guidance regarding the  
18      following:

19       (1) providing an overview of the rights established and  
20      protected by various sources, including the United States  
21      Constitution, the New Jersey Constitution, federal and State law,  
22      and case law, concerning religious freedom, and any limitations  
23      those sources place on a student's rights to wear articles of faith in  
24      school;

25       (2) maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment that  
26      is free from discrimination and harassment for students of all  
27      religious faiths; and

28       (3) ensuring that teachers and school counselors are  
29      knowledgeable regarding issues and concerns relevant to a student's  
30      right to wear articles of faith in school.

31      c.   The guidelines shall include information on organizations or  
32      other resources available to students and parents that provide  
33      support to students of various religious faiths.

34      d.   The commissioner shall periodically review the guidelines  
35      developed pursuant to this section, and shall update or modify the  
36      guidelines, as appropriate, in accordance with applicable current  
37      State or federal laws and regulations.

38  
39      2.   The Commissioner of Education shall provide school  
40      districts with guidance and resources, including providing  
41      professional development opportunities to teachers, administrators,  
42      school counselors, bus drivers, coaches, and other school staff  
43      regarding a student's right to wear articles of faith in school, as well  
44      as guidance and resources for any other issues or concerns relevant  
45      to students of various religious faiths as deemed necessary by the  
46      commissioner.

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48      3.   This act shall take effect immediately.

## STATEMENT

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education to develop and distribute to school districts guidelines concerning a student's right to wear articles of faith in school. The purpose of the guidelines is to provide direction for schools in addressing common issues concerning the rights of students with respect to wearing articles of faith in school, and to assist school districts in establishing policies and procedures that ensure a supportive and nondiscriminatory environment for students of all religious faiths.

Under the bill, the guidelines developed by the commissioner will include, but not be limited to, information and guidance regarding the following:

(1) providing an overview of the rights established and protected by various sources, including the United States Constitution, the New Jersey Constitution, federal and State law, and case law, concerning religious freedom, and any limitations those sources place on a student's rights to wear articles of faith in school;

(2) maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment that is free from discrimination and harassment for students of all religious faiths; and

(3) ensuring that teachers and school counselors are knowledgeable regarding issues and concerns relevant to a student's right to wear articles of faith in school.

The guidelines will include information on organizations or other resources available to students and parents that provide support to students of various religious faiths.

The commissioner is required to periodically review the guidelines developed pursuant to this section, and shall update or modify the guidelines, as appropriate, in accordance with applicable current State or federal laws and regulations.

The commissioner will provide school districts with guidance and resources, including providing professional development opportunities to teachers, administrators, school counselors, bus drivers, coaches, and other school staff regarding a student's right to wear articles of faith in school, as well as guidance and resources for any other issues or concerns relevant to students of various religious faiths deemed necessary by the commissioner.