

HOUSE SUMMARY OF SENATE AMENDMENTS**HB 371****2025 Regular Session****Amedee**

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS: Provides relative to the free exercise of religion

Synopsis of Senate Amendments

1. The set of floor amendments removes the amendment set adopted in the Senate Committee on Education and returns the bill in the same manner as it left the House.

Digest of Bill as Finally Passed by Senate

Present law provides for the "Preservation of Religious Freedom Act" and provides that the free exercise of religion is a fundamental right of the highest order in this state.

Proposed law provides that in 2023, the legislature adopted Article XII, Section 17 of the Constitution of La. which affirms the freedom of worship in churches or other places of worship.

Proposed law provides that the government shall not discriminate against a church or other place of worship by requiring restrictions that are greater than the least severe restrictions that are imposed upon or enforced against any secular business, service, or assembly.

Proposed law (R.S. 13:5233.1) provides that, if a church or other place of worship has met the requirements for zoning, building code, and fire safety regulation, and has received an occupancy license, the government shall not restrict or deny the use of the building in any of the following manners:

- (1) Based upon the day of the week the building is being used.
- (2) Based upon the content or types of religious instruction, education, or activities conducted in the building.
- (3) For a mother's day out program.
- (4) For a meeting of two or more parents or children participating in a home study program or home study cooperative.
- (5) For a Vacation Bible School or Bible Camp.

Proposed law provides that nothing in proposed law shall prevent enforcement of Title 14 of the La. Revised Statutes of 1950 or any other applicable provisions of criminal law.

Present law provides that the definition of "compelling state interest" includes the interest of the state to protect the best interest of a child and the health, safety, and welfare of a child.

Proposed law expands the definition of "compelling state interest" and "exercise of religion".

Present law provides that a violation of the Preservation of Religious Freedom Act is asserted as a claim or defense in judicial proceeding.

Proposed law retains present law and provides that a violation of the Preservation of Religious Freedom Act is asserted as a claim or defense in an administrative proceeding. Provides that remedies also include court approved expert witness fees.

Proposed law provides that a person is to bring an action to assert a claim for damages not later than one year after the date that an action was dismissed by an administrative law judge, or there was a finding in favor of the person on the merit which resulted in a claim authorized pursuant to the Preservation of Religious Freedom Act.

Proposed law provides that an action can be asserted no later than one year from the 75th day after the date on which the notice is mailed pursuant to R.S. 13:5238.

Proposed law provides that two or more parents whose children are participating in an approved home study program may form a home study education cooperative for any of the following purposes:

- (1) Increasing a child's academic performance.
- (2) Completing courses required for a Taylor Opportunity Program for a student scholarship pursuant to R.S. 17:5001 et seq.
- (3) Facilitating socialization for student enrichment.
- (4) Facilitating student recreational or athletic activities.

Proposed law defines "home study education cooperative" and "mother's day out program".

Proposed law expands the definition of "camp" to include a Vacation Bible School or Bible Camp.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 13:5232(1), 5233, 5234(3), (5), and (6)(intro. para.), 5237, 5239, and 5240(A) and (B) and R.S. 17:407.33(1); Adds R.S. 13:5232(7) and 5233.1 and R.S. 17:236.1(H) and 407.33(9) and (10))