SLS 26RS-117 **ENGROSSED**

2026 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 112

BY SENATOR HODGES

SCHOOLS. Provides that public school boards may adopt a policy to authorize released time for K-12 public school students, subject to parental approval. (gov sig)

AN ACT

To enact Subpart E of Part III of Chapter 1 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 17:288.1 through 288.4, and R.S. 17:3996(B)(92), relative to parental choice in education; to authorize released time courses under certain circumstances; to provide for religious education subject to parental authorization; to authorize public school boards to adopt certain policies; to provide for immunity from liability for public school boards that authorize released time; to require parental consent for minor students; to provide for requirements; to require that parents receive certain information; to authorize academic credit; to provide for legislative intent; to provide for definitions; to provide for an effective date; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. Subpart E of Part III of Chapter 1 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, comprised of R.S. 17:288.1 through 288.4, and R.S. 17:3996(B)(92) are hereby enacted to read as follows:

SUBPART E. SCHOOL RELEASED TIME EDUCATION ACT

§288.1. Short title; legislative intent

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

A. This Subpart shall be known as and may be cited as the "School Released Time Education Act".

B. The legislature finds all of the following:

(1) In 1952, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that public schools may release students during school hours for off-campus religious instruction, provided that there is parental consent and that the program is not publicly funded. The ruling established that public schools allowing released time for religious instruction is permissible under the Constitution of the United States of America. (*Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306).

(2) Article 101 of the Louisiana Children's Code declares that "(t)he people of Louisiana recognize the family as the most fundamental unit of human society; that preserving families is essential to a free society; that the relationship between parent and child is preeminent in establishing and maintaining the well-being of the child; that parents have the responsibility for providing the basic necessities of life as well as love and affection to their children; that parents have the paramount right to raise their children in accordance with their own values and traditions; that parents should make the decisions regarding where and with whom the child shall reside, the educational, moral, ethical, and religious training of the child . . ."

(3) As interest grows across Louisiana, legislation is needed to show support for parents' rights to request released time courses of education for their children.

§288.2. Definitions

Unless otherwise indicated, the following definitions shall apply to this Subpart:

(1) "Department" means the Louisiana Department of Education.

(2) "Parent" means a biological birth parent, an adoptive parent, or the legal guardian who is authorized by law to make decisions regarding the education of their minor child.

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

(3) "Released time course" means a course in religious instruction taught by a sponsoring entity in which a student is allowed to attend, subject to prior approval by the minor student's parent, at an off-campus location, unless the equal access provisions in R.S. 17:288.3 allow for the course to be taught on campus.

(4) "School board" means the public city, parish, or other school board that operates a public school, subject to the provisions of this Title.

(5) "School" means a public school, as defined in R.S. 17:236, that is under the jurisdiction of the school board.

(6) "Sponsoring entity" means a church or other religious organization that is qualified as a tax exempt organization under Section 501(c) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and receives written parental permission from parents and authorization from the school board, to operate a released time course program.

(7) "Student adult" means a person who is eighteen years of age or older or is an emancipated minor who is authorized by law to make his own decisions regarding his education.

§288.3. Released time courses; authorization; parental approval; requirements; limitation on liability

A. Each school board may adopt a policy that allows students, subject to parental approval, to participate in a released time course.

B. The policy adopted by the school board shall require all of the following:

(1) That the minor student's parent gives written consent for the minor student to attend a released time course.

(2) That the student adult indicates, in writing, his consent to attend the released time course.

(3) That any sponsoring entity of a released time course that provides transportation of students to or from a released time course maintain

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

automobile liability insurance with coverage limits in an amount not less than the minimum coverage required by the school board for school buses operated by or on behalf of the school system. Proof of such insurance shall be furnished to the school board as a condition of providing such transportation.

C. The written consent, required in this Section, shall be on a form created by the school board and shall include a notice that contains the following:

(1) That the school and school board is free from liability for any injury that occurs while the student is off campus at a released time course.

(2) That the school and school board is free from liability while the student is being transported to or from the released time course.

(3) That any liability for injury that occurs at the released time course is solely the responsibility of the entity sponsoring the released time course.

(4) That any liability for injuries that occur during the transportation to or from the released time course shall be solely the responsibility of the sponsoring entity or the person authorized, pursuant to this Subpart, to transport the student.

D.(1) The sponsoring entity of the released time course shall maintain attendance records and make them available to the school that the student attends or to the school board.

(2) The released time course shall be no less than one hour and no more than five hours per school week.

(3) When notification is given to a school, by a parent or student adult, that the student is attending the released time course and subsequently does not attend the course and is not otherwise present at the school, then the student shall be recorded as having an unexcused absence by the school for that time and shall be subject to the provisions of R.S. 17:233.

E. Criminal background checks shall be conducted on each instructor of the released time course, as provided in R.S. 15:587.1.

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

F.(1) The sponsoring entity assumes liability for the student while under the control of the sponsoring entity.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, an authorizing school board, school, or any officer or employee thereof shall be immune from liability from any action or suit for any injury that takes place at a released timed course held off campus or that takes place while the student is being transported to or from the released timed course.

(3) Liability associated with any transportation of students to and from a released time course that is at a location other than the school shall be the responsibility of whichever of the following that applies:

(a) The parent who transports the parent's own child.

(b) Another person designated by the parent to transport the minor student.

(c) The sponsoring entity who is authorized by the parent to transport the student.

(d) The student adult who transports himself.

G. Any transportation to and from a released time course shall be subject to specific prior written authorization by the parent unless the parent is transporting the parent's own child.

H.(1) Released time courses shall not to be held on school property unless permitted under a neutral policy of equal access that opens school property for use by community groups. To the extent that the other community groups are allowed to use school property, then the school shall not discriminate against the sponsoring entity, the student, or the parent who desires to have the minor student attend the released time course.

(2) Nothing in this Subpart shall be interpreted to deny a released time course or the sponsoring entity equal access to funds, benefits, or services that the local school system may provide or make available to community groups or independent secular entities.

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

§288.4. Credit for released time courses

A. The department shall provide a course credit code that participating schools may use to award academic credit for the completion of a released time course.

B. Nothing in this Subpart shall prohibit a participating school from using the course credit code for high school students associated with the academic course taught on the history and literature of the Bible, pursuant to R.S. 17:282.

* * *

§3996. Charter schools; exemptions; requirements

* * *

B. Notwithstanding any state law, rule, or regulation to the contrary and except as may be otherwise specifically provided for in an approved charter, a charter school established and operated in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter and its approved charter and the school's officers and employees shall be exempt from all statutory mandates or other statutory requirements that are applicable to public schools and to public school officers and employees except for the following laws otherwise applicable to public schools with the same grades:

* * *

(92) Released time, R.S. 17:288.1 et seq.

Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become effective on the day following such approval.

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Senate Legislative Services. The keyword, summary, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

DIGEST

SB 112 Engrossed 2026 Regular Session Hodges

Proposed law provides that each school board may adopt a policy that allows students, subject to parental approval, to attend a released time course. Proposed law defines "released time course" as a course in religious instruction taught by a sponsoring entity in which a student is allowed to attend, subject to approval by the child's parent or legal guardian.

Proposed law provides that the legislature finds, as follows:

(1) In 1952, the United States Supreme Court ruled that public schools may release students during school hours for off-campus religious instruction, provided that there is parental consent and that the program is not publicly funded.

(2) That the La. Children's Code declares that the people of La. recognize the family as the most fundamental unit of human society; that preserving families is essential to a free society; that the relationship between parent and child is preeminent in establishing and maintaining the well-being of the child; that parents should make the decisions regarding the educational, moral, ethical, and religious training of the child.

(3) As interest in released time for religious instruction grows across our state, legislation is needed to show support for parents' rights to request released time.

Proposed law defines a "sponsoring entity" of a course to mean a church or other religious organization that is IRS tax-exempt and that receives authorization from the school board to operate a released time course.

Proposed law defines "department", "parent", "school board", "school", and "student adult".

Proposed law provides that the school is free from liability for any injury that occurs while the student is off-campus at a released time course or being transported to the course.

Proposed law requires that any sponsoring entity of a released time course that provides transportation of students to or from such course maintain automobile liability insurance with coverage limits not less than the minimum required by the school board for school buses operated by or on behalf of the school system. Proposed law further requires that proof of such liability insurance be provided to the school board as a condition of providing transportation.

Proposed law provides that a criminal background check must be conducted on each instructor of the released time course.

Proposed law provides that the written parental consent or authorization to attend the released time course is to include a notice that contains all of the following:

(1) That the school and school board has no liability for any injury that occurs while the student is at an off-campus released time course.

(2) That the school and school board have no liability for the transportation to or from the released time course.

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.

(3) That the sponsoring entity is responsible for any liability associated with the released time course.

(4) That any liability for injuries that occur during the transportation to or from the released time course shall be solely the responsibility of the sponsoring entity, the parent, or whoever the parent authorizes to transport the child.

Proposed law provides that the sponsoring entity of the released time course maintains attendance records and makes them available to the school that the student attends.

Proposed law provides that released time course is to be between one and five hours per school week and that if the student is absent from the course or not at school, then the student will be counted as absent for truancy purposes.

Proposed law provides that the La. Dept. of Education is to provide a course credit code that participating schools may use to award academic credit for the completion of a released time course or the schools may use the academic credit for the course taught on the history and literature of the Bible, under present law.

Proposed law provides that the released time courses are not to be held on school property unless permitted under a neutral policy of equal access that opens school property for use by secular community groups.

Proposed law provides that proposed law is to be known as and may be cited as the "School Released Time Education Act".

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

(Adds R.S. 17:288.1-288.4 and R.S. 17:3996(B)(92))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the original bill

1. Adds the requirement that a sponsoring entity that transports students must have auto liability insurance in the amount required by school bus drivers.

2. Makes technical changes.

Coding: Words which are ~~struck through~~ are deletions from existing law; words in **boldface type and underscored** are additions.