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.

(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.