

HOUSE BILL NO. 5656

April 24, 2024, Introduced by Reps. Puri, Aiyash and Farhat and referred to the Committee on Education.

A bill to require that certain postsecondary educational institutions in this state adopt policies that ensure the reasonable accommodation of sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of students with regard to all examinations and other academic requirements; and to provide for the duties of certain state and local governmental officers and entities.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

1 Sec. 1. This act may be cited as the "religious accommodation
2 in postsecondary education act".

3 Sec. 2. As used in this act, "postsecondary educational

1 institution" or "institution" means a public or private degree- or
2 certificate-granting college or university, junior college, or
3 community college located in this state and includes, to the
4 greatest extent consistent with the constitutional autonomy of its
5 governing board, an institution of higher education described in
6 section 4, 5, or 6 of article VIII of the state constitution of
7 1963.

8 Sec. 3. Each postsecondary educational institution shall adopt
9 a policy that ensures reasonable accommodation of the sincerely
10 held religious beliefs and practices of every student with regard
11 to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for
12 reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief. All of the
13 following apply to the policy required by this section:

14 (a) The policy must permit a student to be absent for up to 3
15 days each academic term to take holidays for reasons of faith or
16 religious or spiritual belief or participate in organized
17 activities conducted under the auspices of a religious
18 denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization.
19 The institution shall not impose an academic penalty as a result of
20 a student being absent as permitted by the policy.

21 (b) The policy must require that students be provided with
22 alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other
23 academic requirements missed due to an absence described in
24 subdivision (a), if both of the following apply:

25 (i) The student's sincerely held religious belief or practice
26 severely affects the student's ability to take an examination or
27 meet an academic requirement.

28 (ii) Not later than 14 days after the first day of instruction
29 in a particular course, the student provides the instructor with

1 written notice of the specific dates for which the student requests
2 alternative accommodations.

3 (c) The policy must require instructors to do all of the
4 following:

5 (i) Accept without question the sincerity of a student's stated
6 religious or spiritual belief or practice.

7 (ii) Keep student requests for alternative accommodations
8 confidential.

9 (iii) For a student seeking an accommodation as to the time and
10 date of an examination or other academic requirement, schedule an
11 alternative time and date for that examination or other academic
12 requirement, which may be before or after the time and date the
13 examination or other academic requirement was originally scheduled,
14 without prejudicial effect.

15 (iv) Include in each course syllabus a statement regarding the
16 institution's policy adopted under this section. The statement must
17 include both of the following:

18 (A) A description of the general procedure for requesting
19 accommodations.

20 (B) Contact information for an individual whom a student may
21 contact for more information about the policy adopted under this
22 section.

23 (d) The policy must require the institution to post both of
24 the following in a prominent location on the institution's website:

25 (i) A copy of the policy adopted under this section, which must
26 include the contact information of an individual who can provide
27 further information about the policy.

28 (ii) At the beginning of each academic year, a list of
29 religious holidays or festivals that the institution intends to

1 recognize for the next 2 academic years. The list must be
2 accompanied by a statement that the list is nonexhaustive and will
3 not be used by the institution to deny accommodation to a student
4 for a holiday or festival of the student's faith or religious or
5 spiritual belief system that does not appear on the list, and that
6 the institution is committed to providing every student full and
7 reasonable accommodations for any sincerely held religious belief
8 or practice with regard to any examination or other academic
9 requirement.

10 (e) The policy must require that any publication identifying
11 religious holidays or festivals recognized by the institution be
12 accompanied by the statement described in subdivision (d) (ii).

13 (f) The policy must include a procedure under which a student
14 may notify the institution of any grievance with regard to the
15 implementation of the policy.