



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 95

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to consult with faith-based organizations to develop and provide all grade levels with a curriculum that focuses on religious diversity; to provide professional development focused on religious diversity for teachers, staff, and administrators; to ensure accurate classification of hate crimes in annual school reports and immediate notification and full disclosure to parents of hate crime statistics; and to ensure that schools take actions to condemn bullying and harassment based on religious clothing, food requirements, and the need for prayer space and time year round.

By Council Members Hanif, Schulman, Avilés, Louis, Krishnan, Salaam, Brewer, Ossé, Sanchez, Powers, Marte, Narcisse, Won, De La Rosa, Rivera, Bottcher, Menin, Lee, Hudson, Abreu, Nurse, Brannan, Brooks-Powers, Cabán, Feliz, Stevens, Gutiérrez, Joseph, Williams and Hanks.

Whereas, According to a 2022 Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) national survey, about 62 percent of American Muslims (with a higher percentage of American Muslims under 50 years of age) and 50 percent of American Jews reported facing religious discrimination in the past year; and

Whereas, According to the ISPU national survey, about 48 percent of Muslim families and 13 percent of Jewish families reported having a school-age child face religious-based bullying in the past year, with about 20 percent of Muslim families reporting almost daily bullying; and

Whereas, According to the ISPU national survey, about 64 percent of Muslim families who reported religious-based bullying of their children said it was from other students at school and about 31 percent said it was online, while about 42 percent said it was from a teacher or school official at school and about 19 percent said it was online; and

Whereas, As reported by the Islamic Networks Group, a study conducted of Muslim students showed that 57 percent of respondents reported seeing offensive online posts by peers, 26 percent reported cyberbullying, 19 percent reported physical harm or harassment, and 36 percent of hijab-wearing girls reported having their hijab offensively touched or pulled; and

Whereas, Data from 2019 and 2022 surveys conducted by the Muslim Community Network (MCN) in New York City (NYC) showed that Muslim youth between 10 and 18 years of age experienced or witnessed hate crimes most frequently of all age groups, with about 44 percent having experienced or witnessed a hate crime in 2019; and

Whereas, According to a 2022 report by the New York chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-NY) documenting bias and hate crimes against Muslim New Yorkers, about 34 percent of those incidents occurred in educational institutions; and

Whereas, A 2014 study by the Sikh Coalition, an advocacy group, reported that about 54 percent of all American Sikh school-age children have been bullied at school, with 67 percent of boys wearing traditional turbans experiencing bullying; and

Whereas, The Coalition of Hindus of North America noted the rising number of hate crimes against Hindus worldwide, as supported by 2020 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data documenting a 500 percent increase in hate crimes against Indian Americans; and

Whereas, Academically speaking, bias-based bullying can be defined as “physical, verbal, social, or cyber-based threats directed toward a minority population based upon race, ethnicity, religious belief, gender, or sexual orientation and includes a systematic abuse of power that is characterized by intentionality, frequency, and imbalance of power”; and

Whereas, Research shows that implicit and explicit bias-based bullying is associated with poor academic functioning in students as well as negative mental and social outcomes, including depression, decreased quality of life, anxiety, low self-esteem, and conduct disorders; and

Whereas, Bias-based bullying has increased significantly over the last few years in the United States (U.S.), particularly following the election of President Donald Trump; and

Whereas, The National Council for the Social Studies stated that the “study of religion from an academic, non-devotional perspective in primary, middle, and secondary school is critical for decreasing

religious illiteracy and the bigotry and prejudice it fuels”; and

Whereas, Many advocates, including ISPU, contend that lessons in school that address religious biases and inaccuracies can help decrease religious-based bullying; and

Whereas, Religious-based bullying is often based on misunderstandings or negative perceptions about how other individuals express their faith; and

Whereas, Teachers often do not have the resources to teach about world religions and to dispel biases and hatreds; and

Whereas, According to the Public Religion Research Institute, NYC has the largest number of Jewish and Muslim residents of any municipality in the U.S., making it imperative that NYC’s school curriculum is inclusive of these prominent religions; and

Whereas, According to the FBI’s 2020 Uniform Crime Reporting Program, about 44 percent of the 463 hate crimes reported in New York State were religious-based bias incidents, with about 89 percent of those being anti-Jewish incidents, and these numbers might reflect an underreporting of incidents; and

Whereas, According to a 2019 New York State Comptroller report, there was a significant underreporting of harassment, bullying, and intimidation in NYC Department of Education (DOE) schools in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years; and

Whereas, A curriculum that teaches NYC students in each grade specifically about all world religions by building students’ knowledge, appreciation, and tolerance from kindergarten through grade 12 could help promote an acceptance of religious diversity and discourage bullying in NYC schools; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to consult with faith-based organizations to develop and provide all grade levels with a curriculum that focuses on religious diversity; to provide professional development focused on religious diversity for teachers, staff, and administrators; to ensure accurate classification of hate crimes in annual school reports and immediate notification and full disclosure to parents of hate crime statistics; and to ensure that schools take

actions to condemn bullying and harassment based on religious clothing, food requirements, and the need for prayer space and time year round.

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