

More States Pushing to Include Chaplains in Public Schools

In the upcoming school year, Florida public schools will join other states in allowing volunteer chaplains on campus to counsel students. Now that Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) has signed the measure into law, even more states are expected to follow suit.

After this law takes effect July 1, the process will begin as volunteer chaplains apply and undergo background checks. Then it will be up to school districts, individual students, and their parents to take part.

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“No one’s being forced to do anything,” Gov. DeSantis said in a press conference after signing the measure into law. “But to exclude religious groups from campus, that is discrimination. You’re basically saying that God has no place. That’s wrong.”

“It’s a great thing – my dad was a preacher. I’m a preacher’s kid and it’s great,” Paul Renner (R) of the Florida House of Representatives told CBN News.

More than a dozen states, including Iowa, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Ohio have proposed measures to allow a chaplaincy program in public schools.

“Seventeen states are involved in chaplain legislation,” Rocky Malloy, CEO of the National School Chaplain Association, told CBN News. “It just recently, it passed out of both houses of Louisiana. We expect it to be sent to the governor soon. It is happening around the country because it’s so needed.”

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Renner believes chaplains can offer alternatives for students, pointing out that guidance counselors in the state had allowed and even encouraged students to transition to the opposite sex without their parent's consent.

"They were given different clothes to wear, changing their name without ever telling their parents," Renner commented. "If this is the kind of guidance they're getting from guidance counselors, I think it's about time we have a different perspective in the middle of the school that does respect our values."

The recent push for chaplains comes as mental health issues among students are growing and schools face a shortage of counselors.

According to the American School Counselor Association, the disparity for the 2022-2023 school year came in at a ratio of 385 students to one counselor. The recommended number is 250 to one.

Malloy said he cannot overemphasize the great need.

"I got news of two children that committed suicide," Malloy explained. "One was in eighth grade, one was in 10th grade, and it's schools that did not have chaplains. The chaplain's role is to prevent that type of calamity from happening."

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