



NEWTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

January 28, 2025

Freedom From Religion Foundation
P.O. Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Mr. Joshi:

The Newton Community School District acknowledges receipt of your letter dated January 15, 2025, regarding concerns about a video posted on the high school girls' basketball social media account which depicted the team praying with the head coach present.

The District is committed to ensuring compliance with applicable law, including the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. You are correct the Establishment Clause requires that the District not take actions respecting the establishment of religion. The District is aware of its obligations in this regard, and appreciates the purpose underlying this important constitutional provision.

Upon receiving your letter, we reviewed the matter in accordance with District policies and procedures. In response to that review, we removed the video from the social media account at issue. We will also take steps to ensure all social media accounts held by the District for student activities are not used to post messages that could be perceived by students as sponsorship of a particular religion or religion in general.

In addition, we have addressed this matter with the coach involved and relevant supervisory personnel. We will also review the Establishment Clause with the entire athletics staff and direct them to comply with the restrictions on participating in prayer with students. Of course, the Establishment Clause should not be interpreted to infringe on an individual's free exercise of religion.

Thank you for reaching out to us. I trust this letter resolves the matter. If you have further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Tom Messinger, Superintendent