

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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July 21, 2025

**SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: commissioner@fldoe.org**

Anastasios Kamoutsas  
Commissioner of Education  
Florida Department of Education  
325 W. Gaines St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Religious language in letter to parents

Dear Commissioner Kamoutsas:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding a letter you recently sent to Florida parents. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with over 42,000 members across the country, including more than 2,000 members in Florida and a chapter, the Central Florida Freethought Community. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

Several concerned Floridians have reported that on July 14, 2025 you sent a letter to Florida parents that was ostensibly about parental rights and Florida's efforts to keep indoctrination out of schools. Ironically, in that letter you state that "God created" students and you end the letter with "God bless." This religious language assumes that all parents and students in Florida believe in a god and subscribe to creationism. While purporting to support parental rights, the Department signals support for and entanglement with religion.

One parent stated, "I consider myself agnostic or perhaps atheist, but regardless of your religion, this document is obviously referring to the Christian God. As such, it is offensive to both anyone with another religion, and myself. My household is raised to be free to choose whatever religion my children want, and so far they have not chosen to be religious. I do not want them exposed to this kind of language [in school] as that is one of the foundations of the [United States]."

A second parent told us, "The state should be separate from religion. Ending your email with 'god bless' proves that the Education Commissioner is biased. It might seem harmless, but it is totally inappropriate."

We write to remind you that all students have the right to be free from religious indoctrination in their public schools and that parents, not the government, have the right to determine which faith, if any, they teach their children to believe in.

The First Amendment prohibits public schools from favoring religion over nonreligion, or one particular religion over others. *See generally Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290 (2000); *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38 (1985); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1967); *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962); *McCullum v. Bd. of Ed.*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948). This letter to all Florida parents making direct references to God and creationism while purporting to promote parental rights signals clear government favoritism for religion over nonreligion.

The Supreme Court has recognized that “[f]amilies entrust public schools with the education of their children, but condition their trust on the understanding that the classroom will not purposely be used to advance religious views that may conflict with the private beliefs of the student and his or her family.” *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578, 584 (1987). “[W]e have long recognized the rights of parents to direct ‘the religious upbringing’ of their children.” *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, No. 24-297, 2025 WL 1773627, at \*13 (U.S. June 27, 2025) (quoting *Espinoza v. Montana Dept. of Revenue*, 591 U.S. 464, 486 (2020)). “[T]he preservation and transmission of religious beliefs and worship is a responsibility and a choice committed to the private sphere.” *Santa Fe*, 530 U.S. at 310 (quoting *Lee*, 505 U.S. at 589). The Department’s use of religious language and implication that all parents and students believe in a god who “created” them suggests that the Department does not respect parents’ right to direct their children’s religious upbringing. Whether to believe in a god or creationism is a matter of conscience and is reserved to the private direction of parents, not the public school system.

This letter sends a clear message that the Florida Department of Education favors students and parents who believe in God and creationism over those who do not. This needlessly marginalizes students and parents, including several of our complainants, who are part of the almost 30 percent<sup>1</sup> of Americans who are nonreligious. At least a third of Generation Z (those born after 1996) have no religion<sup>2</sup>, with a recent survey revealing almost half of Gen Z qualify as “nones” (religiously unaffiliated).<sup>3</sup>

We request that the Florida Department of Education rescind the July 14th letter. In future, the Department must refrain from using religious language or making assumptions about the religious beliefs of Florida’s parents and children. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker  
Co-Presidents

ALG/DB:sfl

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory A. Smith, *Religious ‘Nones’ in America: Who They Are and What They Believe*, Pew Research Center, Jan. 24, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel J. Abrams, *Perspective: Why even secular people should worry about Gen Z’s lack of faith*, Deseret News (Mar. 4, 2023), [www.deseret.com/2023/3/4/23617175/gen-z-faith-religious-nones-civic-life-volunteers-charity](http://www.deseret.com/2023/3/4/23617175/gen-z-faith-religious-nones-civic-life-volunteers-charity).

<sup>3</sup> 2022 Cooperative Election Study of 60,000 respondents, analyzed by Ryan P. Burge, [www.religioninpublic.blog/2023/04/03/gen-z-and-religion-in-2022/](http://www.religioninpublic.blog/2023/04/03/gen-z-and-religion-in-2022/).