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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
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Office

H.B. 353
134th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 353's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Reported by Senate Workforce & Higher Education

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Click and Miranda

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- State institutions of higher education may incur minimal increases in administrative costs to develop or update their policies regarding religious accommodations for students.

Detailed Analysis

The bill directs state institutions of higher education to adopt a policy that reasonably accommodates the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of individual students with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system. Instructors must also include in each course syllabus a statement regarding the institution's policy and accept a student's request for alternative accommodations. Each institution is required to post a copy of the policy and a nonexhaustive list of major religious holidays or festivals for the next two academic years in a prominent location on its website. The bill directs the Department of Higher Education (DHE) to provide each state institution with such a list. Each state institution may adopt DHE's list in its entirety or choose which holidays to include on its list.

According to LBO research, it appears many institutions already have religious accommodation policies in place that meet, or are similar to, the one required under the bill. Several institutions, including, but not limited to, Ohio University,¹ the University of Cincinnati,²

¹ See Ohio University's (OU's) [Ohio News message](#) published on August 27, 2021, which may be accessed by conducting a keyword "Religious Accommodation" search on OU's website: ohio.edu.

² See the University of Cincinnati's (UC's) [Religious Observances and Class Attendance policy](#), which may be accessed by conducting a keyword "Religious Accommodation" search on UC's website: uc.edu.

and Cuyahoga Community College,³ have specific religious accommodation policies. Other institutions, including Ohio State University,⁴ the University of Toledo,⁵ and Kent State University,⁶ specifically list “religious observance” as a legitimate reason for an excused absence in their guides and handbooks. To the extent that they do not currently meet the bill’s requirements, institutions may incur a minimal administrative cost to develop or update their policies and post them online.

HB0353SR/zg

³ See page 51 of Tri-C’s [Student Handbook \(PDF\)](#), which may be accessed under the Student Resources page on Tri-C’s website: tri-c.edu.

⁴ See pages 14-15 of Ohio State University’s (OSU’s) [2021-2022 Buckeye’s Guide to Academic Policies \(PDF\)](#), which may be accessed by conducting a keyword “Academic Policies” search on OSU’s website: osu.edu.

⁵ See the University of Toledo’s (UToledo’s) [Missed Class Policy \(PDF\)](#) published on May 14, 2019, which may be accessed by conducting a keyword “Missed Class” search on UToledo’s website: utoledo.edu.

⁶ See Section 3 – 01.2 (K) of Kent State’s [Administrative policy regarding class attendance and class absence](#), which may be accessed under Chapter 3 of the University Policies on Kent State’s website: kent.edu.