



[Date]

[School District]
[Superintendent]
[Chair of School Board]
[Address]

Subject: Concerns Regarding Untrained School Chaplains:

Dear School Superintendents, School Board:

We hope this letter finds you well. We're writing to express our deep concerns regarding the use and/or appointment of untrained school chaplains within our public- school systems. While the intention behind incorporating spiritual guidance and support into schools may stem from a genuine desire to nurture the holistic development of students, the deployment of untrained chaplains poses significant risks, particularly in terms of divisive exclusionary practices and as yet unknown, unexpected, and unintended consequences

First and foremost, untrained chaplains lack the necessary qualifications and expertise to address the diverse spiritual and religious needs of students in a sensitive and inclusive manner. By using individuals without proper training, we risk marginalizing students from non-dominant faith backgrounds or those who identify as non-religious. This exclusionary practice not only contradicts the principles of equity and inclusion but also fosters an environment where certain belief systems are prioritized over others, ultimately alienating a significant portion of our student body.

Moreover, the presence of untrained chaplains can inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of religious discrimination and intolerance within school settings. Without proper guidance and understanding of diverse religious perspectives, there is a heightened risk of inadvertently promoting one specific faith tradition over others, thereby reinforcing stereotypes and biases. Such practices not only undermine the secular nature of public education but also create barriers to meaningful interfaith dialogue and cooperation among students from varied backgrounds.

Furthermore, the use of untrained chaplains may inadvertently blur the lines between church and state, raising constitutional concerns and legal challenges. Public schools are constitutionally mandated to remain neutral in matters of religion, ensuring that all students, regardless of their faith or belief system, feel respected and valued within the educational environment. By using untrained chaplains who may promote

specific religious ideologies, we risk violating the principle of religious neutrality/freedom and opening the door to potential lawsuits and legal liabilities.

In conclusion, while we recognize the importance of providing spiritual support to students, we urge you to reject the use of untrained chaplains within our schools. Instead, we encourage the exploration of alternative approaches, such as engaging more certified counselors, school psychiatrists, or other trained professionals with expertise in supporting students' diverse spiritual and emotional needs. Regardless, of whatever decision is to be made by your district in this regard, we ask that as a school board and as a superintendent you ensure that no decision be made without input from all stakeholders in your public education system, i.e., parents, students, employees, and the larger community through a feasibility study or some similar mechanism. Most importantly, we ask that you ensure that no changes will be made in your public schools as a consequence of the law until and unless such a study is done. Please take the time to do this right so that our children will not have to suffer while we do this over.

By upholding the principles of inclusion, equity, and diversity, we can ensure that all students feel affirmed and supported in their public-school educational journey.

Best Regards,

James T. Morris

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