

1 **Higher Education Student Belief Accommodation**

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Michael J. Petersen

Senate Sponsor:

2 **LONG TITLE**

3 **General Description:**

4 This bill broadens a protection for a student's sincerely held religious and conscience beliefs.

5 **Highlighted Provisions:**

6 This bill:

- 7 ▶ defines terms;
- 8 ▶ broadens the scope of a requirement for a reasonable accommodation regarding a
- 9 student's sincerely held religious and conscience beliefs;
- 10 ▶ broadens the scope of policies that an institution of higher education establishes;
- 11 ▶ requires the Utah Board of Higher Education to adopt certain policies; and
- 12 ▶ makes technical and conforming changes.

13 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

14 None

15 **Other Special Clauses:**

16 This bill provides a special effective date.

17 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

18 AMENDS:

19 **53H-7-903**, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session,
20 Chapter 8

21 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

22 Section 1. Section **53H-7-903** is amended to read:

23 **53H-7-903 . Student religious and conscience accommodations.**

24 (1) As used in this section:

25 (a) "Conscience" means the same as that term is defined in Section 67-27-106.

26 (b) "Reasonably accommodate" means taking reasonable steps to modify expectations
27 for a student's participation in an examination or other academic requirement by:

28 (i) excusing participation;

- 31 (ii) offering an alternative deadline or schedule; or
32 (iii) offering an alternative examination, assignment, or activity.
- 33 [(1)] (2)(a) An institution shall, for any course:
- 34 [(a)] (i) reasonably accommodate a student's absence from an examination or other
35 academic requirement under the circumstances described in Subsection [(2)] (3)
36 for reasons of:
37 [(i)] (A) the student's [faith] religion or conscience; or
38 [(ii)] (B) the student's participation in an organized activity conducted under the
39 auspices of the student's religious tradition or religious organization; and
40 [(b)] (ii) ensure that an accommodation described in Subsection [(1)(a)] (2)(a)(i) does
41 not adversely impact the student's academic opportunities.
- 42 (b) An institution shall, for a course that the institution mandates for graduation or for an
43 academic major, reasonably accommodate a student's objection to a required
44 assignment or activity for reasons of the student's sincerely held religious or
45 conscience belief.
- 46 [(2)] (3) An institution shall make an accommodation described in Subsection [(1)] (2) if:
- 47 (a) for an accommodation described in Subsection (2)(a), the time at which an
48 examination or academic requirement is scheduled to occur creates an undue
49 hardship for a student due to the student's sincerely held religious or conscience
50 belief; and
- 51 (b) the student provides a written notice to the instructor of the course for which the
52 student seeks the accommodation regarding [~~the date of the examination or academic~~
53 ~~requirement for which the student seeks~~]the accommodation.
- 54 [(3)] (4) An institution shall establish policies related to the accommodation described in
55 Subsection [(1)] (2) that:
- 56 (a) require the institution to provide the accommodation with respect to [~~when the~~
57 ~~student participates~~] the student's participation in examinations and other academic
58 requirements;
- 59 (b) allow an instructor who receives a notice described in Subsection [(2)(b)] (3)(b) to:
60 (i) schedule an alternative examination time before or after the regularly scheduled
61 examination; or
62 (ii) make accommodations for other academic requirements related to the
63 accommodation; and
- 64 (c) require an instructor who receives a notice described in Subsection [(2)(b)] (3)(b) to

65 keep confidential a student's request for the accommodation.

66 [~~(4)~~] (5)(a) The commissioner shall annually:

67 (i) create a list of the dates of religious holidays for the following two years; and

68 (ii) distribute the list described in Subsection [~~(4)~~](a) (5)(a) to an institution.

69 (b) The creation and distribution of the list described in Subsection [~~(4)~~](a) (5)(a)(i) does

70 not prohibit a student from seeking, or an institution from granting, an

71 accommodation for a date of a religious holiday that is not included on that list.

72 [~~(5)~~] (6) An institution shall:

73 (a) designate a point of contact for information about an accommodation described in
74 Subsection [~~(4)~~] (2);

75 (b) establish a process by which a student or educator may submit a grievance with
76 regards to implementation of this section; and

77 (c) publish the following information on the institution's website and update the
78 information annually:

79 (i) the institution's religious and conscience accommodation policies described in
80 Subsection [~~(3)~~] (4);

81 (ii) the point of contact described in Subsection [~~(5)~~](a) (6)(a);

82 (iii) the list described in Subsection [~~(4)~~] (5);

83 (iv) a description of the general procedure to request an accommodation described in
84 Subsection [~~(4)~~] (2); and

85 (v) the grievance process described in Subsection [~~(5)~~](b) (6)(b).

86 (7) The board shall establish policies to:

87 (a) ensure the protection of students' sincerely held religious and conscience beliefs;

88 (b) provide guidelines for the institution policies described in Subsection (4), including
89 guidance for avoiding encroachment on a student's sincerely held religious and
90 conscience beliefs; and

91 (c) provide parameters for the accommodations described in this section.

92 Section 2. **Effective Date.**

93 This bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.