



Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools

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Dear Judge Denise Sher:

The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Board of Education is writing to share concerns regarding the enforcement of the recently enacted law removing the religious exemption for students in NYS schools. While we as a board will make sure that our district follows the law, we are beginning to see its impact first hand. Our district has approximately 40 students (1.3% of population) that were receiving the exemption at the end of the 2018-19 school year. We have been in communication with all of them to make sure they are properly informed of the requirements of the new law and of their options.

Given the short timeline between the passing of the law and the start of school, we see hardship emerging for the families involved. Families must decide immediately whether or not to start the vaccination process. If they elect not to vaccinate, they must make arrangements to send their children to an out of state school (probably necessitating a move) or begin homeschooling. One of our big concerns is that home schooling is not a trivial task and parents are not necessarily equipped or readily prepared to undertake this body of work. As a district, we then become responsible for ensuring all homeschooling programs are substantially equivalent to the requirements of the school district and the New York State Education Department.

Our communication is not intended to take a political stance on the law, but rather to provide you information from those on the front line of the implementation. We are aware that parent advocacy groups have engaged the legal process to ask for an extension on the implementation date of the law. There are recent examples wherein a delay in the implementation of a law has proven helpful. We are asking you to consider if such a delay may be prudent in this case.

Thank you,

Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Board of Education

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