

1 State of Arkansas *As Engrossed: H3/18/19 S4/4/19*

2 92nd General Assembly

A Bill

3 Regular Session, 2019

HOUSE BILL 1626

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5 By: Representatives Cloud, Dotson

6 By: Senator B. Ballinger

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For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC STUDY
10 OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS REQUEST THAT THE
11 COURSE BE OFFERED; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

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Subtitle

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CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC
16 STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS
17 REQUEST THAT THE COURSE BE OFFERED.

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20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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22 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-145 is amended to read as follows:

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6-16-145. Academic study of the Bible course.

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(a)(1) The State Board of Education shall allow for an elective
25 academic study of the Bible course or courses that consist of a nonsectarian,
26 nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature,
27 art, music, culture, and politics to be offered to students in public ~~school~~
28 schools or school districts if the academic study of the Bible course meets
29 the standards listed in this section.

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(2) The curriculum standards submitted by a public school or
31 school district for approval of an academic study of the Bible course shall
32 meet the:

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(A) Academic rigor and curriculum standards of other
34 elective courses approved by the state board; and

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(B) Requirements of the Arkansas Constitution and the
36 United States Constitution.



1 (b)(1) A public school or school district that elects to offer an
2 academic study of the Bible course shall implement the course in accordance
3 with the Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution, including
4 the manner in which the course is taught in the classroom and the assignment
5 of public school or school district personnel teaching the course.

6 (2) Personnel assigned to teach the course shall be licensed to
7 teach in the State of Arkansas.

8 (3) Personnel shall not be assigned to teach the course based on
9 any:

10 (A) Religious test;

11 (B) Profession of faith or lack of faith;

12 (C) Prior or present religious affiliation or lack of
13 affiliation; or

14 (D) Criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of
15 beliefs about the Bible.

16 (c) An academic study of the Bible course offered by a public school
17 or school district shall:

18 (1) Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no
19 attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of
20 the biblical materials or texts from other religious or cultural traditions;

21 (2) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian
22 interpretation of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural
23 traditions; and

24 (3) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of
25 religious beliefs.

26 (d) A public school or school district that elects to offer an
27 academic study of the Bible course shall use only the standards in this
28 section to:

29 (1) Evaluate textbooks for an academic study of the Bible
30 course; and

31 (2) Teach an academic study of the Bible course.

32 (e) The Department of Education shall, by the 2019-2020 school year,
33 identify, develop, and approve a Bible course for high school credit that
34 meets the requirements in subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section.

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/s/Cloud

APPROVED: 4/15/19