

Faith leaders express concerns about SB 11

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On Jan. 8, over 160 Texas faith leaders wrote an [open letter](#) to superintendents and school board members across the state, urging them to not adopt SB 11 in their school districts. The letter is posted on the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty website.

[TX SB 11](#), a law encouraging a period of prayer and reading of a religious text in public schools, was passed on June 20, 2025. The bill was introduced in the Senate during the 89th Texas Legislature and became effective Sept. 1, 2025, [requiring school districts to hold votes](#) on adopting prayer policies.

The sign-on letter is a collectivist attempt to steer school boards away from SB 11, with many faith leaders, including Pastors for Texas Children, asserting the law threatens the religious freedom of students and families, instead placing religious instruction in the hands of government entities.

The letter further raises concerns of faith leaders regarding the administration of public education: “SB11 threatens to drive a wedge into public school communities and create unnecessary administrative burdens.”

Consent forms raise administrative concerns

While voluntary, SB 11 requires any desiring participants to submit [consent forms](#), which include a waiver of legal claims under state or federal law, including those under the [Establishment Clause](#), a U.S. First Amendment

clause prohibiting the government from establishing a religion.

Despite the necessity of these forms to monitor student and parental consent, signatory [faith leaders](#) view the extra administrative burden of tracking these forms, setting aside designated prayer time and spaces, and ensuring a lack of student coercion to be burdensome and detracting within a system that already protects the religious freedom of its students.

In an interview with *Baptist Standard*, Rabbi David Segal, Policy Counsel at Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, expressed these concerns: “One of the most concerning mechanisms is the system of waivers and opt-ins a school district and campus would have to manage if such a policy were adopted. It creates, potentially, an administrative nightmare for the leaders of that.”

Religious liberty is an important factor

BJC is one of the partner organizations responsible for developing the open letter. According to [BJC's website](#), the committee is dedicated to “protecting religious liberty for all and defending the separation of church and state.”

The principle of religious liberty [runs deep within Baptist roots](#), as Baptists were the first religious group to adopt the separation of church and state in the early 17th century. Segal emphasizes these ideas as fundamentally Baptist and thus interwoven into BJC's mission: “We are a Baptist organization. We believe deeply in people having a right to pursue a life of faith.

But we also believe what Baptists have believed for our entire history ... that the government has no place in interfering in our religious life or a life of conscience.”

Government interference with religious affairs is primarily a concern regarding religious freedom and a seeming inherent lean toward Christian doctrine SB 11 promotes, a concern expressed by supporters of the letter.

SB 11 potentially favors Christianity

Though unbiased on the surface, opponents note SB 11 encourages practices of the predominant faith group, evidenced by a [compilation of public comments](#) submitted to the Committee on State Affairs for SB 11.

Following the enactment of the bill, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton encouraged students to utilize their time of prayer [reciting the Lord's Prayer](#).

Segal describes this action as a “case in point” concerning SB 11’s perceived Christian bias: “When the Attorney General issued a statement urging school boards to adopt this policy, he ended his press release with a suggestion of which prayer to use, and it’s King James’s version of the Lord’s Prayer, which is a very important prayer for Christians.

“So, that essentially doesn’t have the force of law, but it’s an indication of a kind of bias that can come through when these kinds of things are set up by state officials,” Segal added.

In BJC’s [online press release](#), Blake Ziegler, Texas Field organizer at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said: “Many of our Jewish ancestors sought refuge in the United States because of its separation between religion and government. We fled nations whose theocratic policies persecuted our people and others who did not share the state’s religion, while arbitrarily favoring those who did.”

Ziegler mentioned concerns over SB 11’s impact on religious pluralism in schools, noting religion separate from government interference as essential

to promoting “religious freedom.”

Mounting fears over SB 11’s lack of religious pluralism come after the bill underwent [multiple amendments](#), including those that protect non-participants by prohibiting PA broadcasts of the prayer or study time, and mandating a board vote requirement within six months of the law’s Sept. 1, 2025 effective date.