By:  Campbell S.B. No. 2986

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the protection from adverse action against public schools and institutions of higher education for permitting religious organizations use of facilities.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Chapter 11, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 11.173 to read as follows:

Sec. 11.173.  USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS. (a) A school district or open-enrollment charter school may permit a religious organization to use school facilities for the purpose of hosting religious worship, services, sermons, or assemblies, provided that:

(1)  the use does not interfere with the school's primary educational mission;

(2)  the religious organization provides fair-market rental or reimbursement for utilities, security, or other costs as determined by the school district or governing board, unless waived by the school district or governing board; and

(3)  the religious organization shall be held liable for any damages that may incur in the commission or use of the school's facilities.

(b)  No state agency, political subdivision, school district, or other governmental entity, shall impose a penalty, sanction, or denial of funding to a public school based on its decision to allow religious organizations to use it facilities for religious services.

(c)  The provisions of this section shall not be construed to require any school district or open-enrollment charter school to allow religious services if it elects to not do so.

SECTION 2.  Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding section 51.984 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.984.  USE OF UNIVERSITY FACILITIES BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS. (a) A public institution of higher education in this state may permit religious organizations to use campus facilities for the purpose of hosting religious worship, services, sermons, or assemblies, provided that:

(1)  the use does not interfere with the institution's primary educational mission;

(2)  the religious organization provides fair-market rental or reimbursement for utilities, security, or other costs as determined by the institution or governing board, unless waived by the institution; and

(3)  the religious organization shall be held liable for any damages that may incur in the commission or use of the institution's facilities.

(b)  No state agency, political subdivision, or other governmental entity, shall impose a penalty, sanction, or denial of funding to an institution based on its decision to allow religious organizations to use it facilities for religious services.

(c)  The provisions of this section shall not be construed to require any institution to allow religious services if it elects to not do so.

SECTION 3.  It is the intent of the legislature that every provision, section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or word in this Act, and every application of the provisions in this Act to every person, group of persons, or circumstances, is severable from each other. If any application of any provision in this Act to any person, group of persons, or circumstances, is severable from person, group of persons, or circumstances is found by a court to be invalid for any reason, the remaining applications of that provision to all other persons and circumstances shall be severed and may not be affected.

SECTION 4.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.