

As Introduced

136th General Assembly

Regular Session

2025-2026

H. B. No. 531

Representatives Newman, Ritter

**Cosponsors: Representatives Claggett, Dean, Salvo, King, Miller, M., Click,
Pizzulli, Creech, Plummer, Gross, Richardson**

To amend sections 3314.03 and 3326.11 and to enact
section 3313.475 of the Revised Code to enact
the School Chaplain Act to permit public schools
to engage volunteer chaplains to provide support
services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That sections 3314.03 and 3326.11 be amended
and section 3313.475 of the Revised Code be enacted to read as
follows:

Sec. 3313.475. (A) As used in this section, "chaplain"
means a religious professional who has received endorsement or
certification by a recognized ecclesiastical endorsing agency
and who provides spiritual programming, support, and counseling
outside of a traditional church setting in such places as
hospitals, the armed services, prisons, law enforcement
agencies, and schools.

(B) A school district, community school established
pursuant to Chapter 3314. of the Revised Code, or STEM school
established pursuant to Chapter 3326. of the Revised Code may
accept as a volunteer a chaplain to provide support, services,

and programs for students. A chaplain volunteering in accordance 20
with this section shall not be required to apply for a license 21
or certification with the state board of education. 22

(C) (1) As a condition of volunteering under this section, 23
each volunteer described in division (A) of this section shall 24
be subject to a criminal records check for a person hired by a 25
school district as prescribed by section 3319.391 of the Revised 26
Code. In the manner prescribed by the department of education 27
and workforce, the individual shall submit the criminal records 28
check to the department and shall register with the department 29
during the period in which the individual volunteers at the 30
school district or school. 31

(2) The department shall not accept the application of any 32
individual under this division if the department learns that the 33
individual has pleaded guilty to, has been found guilty by a 34
jury or court of, or has been convicted of any of the offenses 35
listed in division (C) of section 3319.31 of the Revised Code. 36

(3) Not later than December 1, 2026, each board of 37
trustees of a school district or governing authority of a school 38
shall vote at a public meeting of the board or authority on 39
whether to adopt a policy authorizing the district or school to 40
accept as a volunteer a chaplain under this section, beginning 41
in the 2026-2027 school year. 42

(D) Chaplain services may be offered in addition to, but 43
not in lieu of, school counselor services. 44

(E) A student may participate in supports, programs, or 45
services provided by a chaplain during school hours only if the 46
student's parent or legal guardian has provided written 47
permission for the student to do so. 48

(F) Each school district or school may establish 49
requirements and procedures as necessary to implement this 50
section. 51

Sec. 3314.03. A copy of every contract entered into under 52
this section shall be filed with the director of education and 53
workforce. The department of education and workforce shall make 54
available on its web site a copy of every approved, executed 55
contract filed with the director under this section. 56

(A) Each contract entered into between a sponsor and the 57
governing authority of a community school shall specify the 58
following: 59

(1) That the school shall be established as either of the 60
following: 61

(a) A nonprofit corporation established under Chapter 62
1702. of the Revised Code, if established prior to April 8, 63
2003; 64

(b) A public benefit corporation established under Chapter 65
1702. of the Revised Code, if established after April 8, 2003. 66

(2) The education program of the school, including the 67
school's mission and educational philosophy, the characteristics 68
of the students the school is expected to attract, the ages and 69
grades of students, and the focus of the curriculum; 70

(3) The academic goals to be achieved and the method of 71
measurement that will be used to determine progress toward those 72
goals, which shall include the statewide achievement 73
assessments; 74

(4) Performance standards, including but not limited to 75
all applicable report card measures set forth in section 3302.03 76

or 3314.017 of the Revised Code, by which the success of the 77
school will be evaluated by the sponsor; 78

(5) The admission standards of section 3314.06 of the 79
Revised Code and, if applicable, section 3314.061 of the Revised 80
Code; 81

(6) (a) Dismissal procedures; 82

(b) A requirement that the governing authority adopt an 83
attendance policy that includes a procedure for automatically 84
withdrawing a student from the school if the student without a 85
legitimate excuse fails to participate in seventy-two 86
consecutive hours of the learning opportunities offered to the 87
student. 88

(7) The ways by which the school will achieve racial and 89
ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves; 90

(8) Requirements for financial audits by the auditor of 91
state. The contract shall require financial records of the 92
school to be maintained in the same manner as are financial 93
records of school districts, pursuant to rules of the auditor of 94
state. Audits shall be conducted in accordance with section 95
117.10 of the Revised Code. 96

(9) An addendum to the contract outlining the facilities 97
to be used that contains at least the following information: 98

(a) A detailed description of each facility used for 99
instructional purposes; 100

(b) The annual costs associated with leasing each facility 101
that are paid by or on behalf of the school; 102

(c) The annual mortgage principal and interest payments 103
that are paid by the school; 104

(d) The name of the lender or landlord, identified as 105
such, and the lender's or landlord's relationship to the 106
operator, if any. 107

(10) Qualifications of employees, including both of the 108
following: 109

(a) A requirement that the school's classroom teachers be 110
licensed in accordance with sections 3319.22 to 3319.31 of the 111
Revised Code, except that a community school may engage 112
noncertificated persons to teach up to twelve hours or forty 113
hours per week pursuant to section 3319.301 of the Revised Code; 114

(b) A prohibition against the school employing an 115
individual described in section 3314.104 of the Revised Code in 116
any position. 117

(11) That the school will comply with the following 118
requirements: 119

(a) The school will provide learning opportunities to a 120
minimum of twenty-five students for a minimum of nine hundred 121
twenty hours per school year. 122

(b) The governing authority will purchase liability 123
insurance, or otherwise provide for the potential liability of 124
the school. 125

(c) The school will be nonsectarian in its programs, 126
admission policies, employment practices, and all other 127
operations, and will not be operated by a sectarian school or 128
religious institution. 129

(d) The school will comply with sections 9.90, 9.91, 130
109.65, 121.22, 149.43, 2151.357, 2151.421, 2313.19, 3301.0710, 131
3301.0711, 3301.0712, 3301.0715, 3301.0729, 3301.24, 3301.948, 132

3302.037, 3313.472, 3313.473, 3313.474, 3313.475, 3313.50, 133
3313.539, 3313.5310, 3313.5318, 3313.5319, 3313.608, 3313.609, 134
3313.6012, 3313.6013, 3313.6014, 3313.6020, 3313.6024, 135
3313.6026, 3313.6028, 3313.6029, 3313.6031, 3313.643, 3313.648, 136
3313.6411, 3313.6413, 3313.66, 3313.661, 3313.662, 3313.666, 137
3313.667, 3313.668, 3313.669, 3313.6610, 3313.67, 3313.671, 138
3313.672, 3313.673, 3313.69, 3313.71, 3313.716, 3313.718, 139
3313.719, 3313.7112, 3313.7117, 3313.721, 3313.753, 3313.80, 140
3313.814, 3313.816, 3313.817, 3313.818, 3313.819, 3313.86, 141
3313.89, 3313.96, 3319.073, 3319.077, 3319.078, 3319.0812, 142
3319.238, 3319.318, 3319.321, 3319.324, 3319.39, 3319.391, 143
3319.393, 3319.41, 3319.46, 3319.90, 3319.614, 3320.01, 3320.02, 144
3320.03, 3320.04, 3321.01, 3321.041, 3321.13, 3321.14, 3321.141, 145
3321.17, 3321.18, 3321.19, 3322.20, 3322.24, 3323.251, 3327.10, 146
4111.17, 4113.52, 5502.262, 5502.703, and 5705.391 and Chapters 147
117., 1347., 2744., 3365., 3742., 4112., 4123., 4141., and 4167. 148
of the Revised Code as if it were a school district and will 149
comply with section 3301.0714 of the Revised Code in the manner 150
specified in section 3314.17 of the Revised Code. 151

(e) The school shall comply with Chapter 102. and section 152
2921.42 of the Revised Code. 153

(f) The school will comply with sections 3313.61, 154
3313.611, 3313.614, 3313.617, 3313.618, and 3313.6114 of the 155
Revised Code, except that for students who enter ninth grade for 156
the first time before July 1, 2010, the requirement in sections 157
3313.61 and 3313.611 of the Revised Code that a person must 158
successfully complete the curriculum in any high school prior to 159
receiving a high school diploma may be met by completing the 160
curriculum adopted by the governing authority of the community 161
school rather than the curriculum specified in Title XXXIII of 162
the Revised Code or any rules of the department. Beginning with 163

students who enter ninth grade for the first time on or after 164
July 1, 2010, the requirement in sections 3313.61 and 3313.611 165
of the Revised Code that a person must successfully complete the 166
curriculum of a high school prior to receiving a high school 167
diploma shall be met by completing the requirements prescribed 168
in section 3313.6027 and division (C) of section 3313.603 of the 169
Revised Code, unless the person qualifies under division (D) or 170
(F) of that section. Each school shall comply with the plan for 171
awarding high school credit based on demonstration of subject 172
area competency, and beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, 173
with the updated plan that permits students enrolled in seventh 174
and eighth grade to meet curriculum requirements based on 175
subject area competency adopted by the department under 176
divisions (J) (1) and (2) of section 3313.603 of the Revised 177
Code. Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, the school shall 178
comply with the framework for granting units of high school 179
credit to students who demonstrate subject area competency 180
through work-based learning experiences, internships, or 181
cooperative education developed by the department under division 182
(J) (3) of section 3313.603 of the Revised Code. 183

(g) The school governing authority will submit within four 184
months after the end of each school year a report of its 185
activities and progress in meeting the goals and standards of 186
divisions (A) (3) and (4) of this section and its financial 187
status to the sponsor and the parents of all students enrolled 188
in the school. 189

(h) The school, unless it is an internet- or computer- 190
based community school, will comply with section 3313.801 of the 191
Revised Code as if it were a school district. 192

(i) If the school is the recipient of moneys from a grant 193

awarded under the federal race to the top program, Division (A), 194
Title XIV, Sections 14005 and 14006 of the "American Recovery 195
and Reinvestment Act of 2009," Pub. L. No. 111-5, 123 Stat. 115, 196
the school will pay teachers based upon performance in 197
accordance with section 3317.141 and will comply with section 198
3319.111 of the Revised Code as if it were a school district. 199

(j) If the school operates a preschool program that is 200
licensed by the department under sections 3301.52 to 3301.59 of 201
the Revised Code, the school shall comply with sections 3301.50 202
to 3301.59 of the Revised Code and the minimum standards for 203
preschool programs prescribed in rules adopted by the department 204
of children and youth under section 3301.53 of the Revised Code. 205

(k) The school will comply with sections 3313.6021 and 206
3313.6023 of the Revised Code as if it were a school district 207
unless it is either of the following: 208

(i) An internet- or computer-based community school; 209

(ii) A community school in which a majority of the 210
enrolled students are children with disabilities as described in 211
division (B) (2) of section 3314.35 of the Revised Code. 212

(l) The school will comply with section 3321.191 of the 213
Revised Code, unless it is an internet- or computer-based 214
community school that is subject to section 3314.261 of the 215
Revised Code. 216

(m) The school will comply with section 3313.7118 of the 217
Revised Code if it serves elementary school students. 218

(12) Arrangements for providing health and other benefits 219
to employees; 220

(13) The length of the contract, which shall begin at the 221

beginning of an academic year. No contract shall exceed five 222
years unless such contract has been renewed pursuant to division 223
(D) of this section. 224

(14) The governing authority of the school, which shall be 225
responsible for carrying out the provisions of the contract; 226

(15) A financial plan detailing an estimated school budget 227
for each year of the period of the contract and specifying the 228
total estimated per pupil expenditure amount for each such year. 229

(16) Requirements and procedures regarding the disposition 230
of employees of the school in the event the contract is 231
terminated or not renewed pursuant to section 3314.07 of the 232
Revised Code; 233

(17) Whether the school is to be created by converting all 234
or part of an existing public school or educational service 235
center building or is to be a new start-up school, and if it is 236
a converted public school or service center building, both of 237
the following: 238

(a) Specification of any duties or responsibilities of an 239
employer that the board of education or service center governing 240
board that operated the school or building before conversion is 241
delegating to the governing authority of the community school 242
with respect to all or any specified group of employees provided 243
the delegation is not prohibited by a collective bargaining 244
agreement applicable to such employees; 245

(b) Alternative arrangements for current public school 246
students who choose not to attend the converted school and for 247
teachers who choose not to teach in the school or building after 248
conversion. 249

(18) Provisions establishing procedures for resolving 250

disputes or differences of opinion between the sponsor and the 251
governing authority of the community school; 252

(19) A provision requiring the governing authority to 253
adopt a policy regarding the admission of students who reside 254
outside the district in which the school is located. That policy 255
shall comply with the admissions procedures specified in 256
sections 3314.06 and 3314.061 of the Revised Code and, at the 257
sole discretion of the authority, shall do one of the following: 258

(a) Prohibit the enrollment of students who reside outside 259
the district in which the school is located; 260

(b) Permit the enrollment of students who reside in 261
districts adjacent to the district in which the school is 262
located; 263

(c) Permit the enrollment of students who reside in any 264
other district in the state. 265

(20) A provision recognizing the authority of the 266
department to take over the sponsorship of the school in 267
accordance with the provisions of division (C) of section 268
3314.015 of the Revised Code; 269

(21) A provision recognizing the sponsor's authority to 270
assume the operation of a school under the conditions specified 271
in division (B) of section 3314.073 of the Revised Code; 272

(22) A provision recognizing both of the following: 273

(a) The authority of public health and safety officials to 274
inspect the facilities of the school and to order the facilities 275
closed if those officials find that the facilities are not in 276
compliance with health and safety laws and regulations; 277

(b) The authority of the department as the community 278

school oversight body to suspend the operation of the school 279
under section 3314.072 of the Revised Code if the department has 280
evidence of conditions or violations of law at the school that 281
pose an imminent danger to the health and safety of the school's 282
students and employees and the sponsor refuses to take such 283
action. 284

(23) A description of the learning opportunities that will 285
be offered to students including both classroom-based and non- 286
classroom-based learning opportunities that is in compliance 287
with criteria for student participation established by the 288
department under division (H) (2) of section 3314.08 of the 289
Revised Code; 290

(24) The school will comply with sections 3302.04 and 291
3302.041 of the Revised Code, except that any action required to 292
be taken by a school district pursuant to those sections shall 293
be taken by the sponsor of the school. 294

(25) Beginning in the 2006-2007 school year, the school 295
will open for operation not later than the thirtieth day of 296
September each school year, unless the mission of the school as 297
specified under division (A) (2) of this section is solely to 298
serve dropouts. In its initial year of operation, if the school 299
fails to open by the thirtieth day of September, or within one 300
year after the adoption of the contract pursuant to division (D) 301
of section 3314.02 of the Revised Code if the mission of the 302
school is solely to serve dropouts, the contract shall be void. 303

(26) Whether the school's governing authority is planning 304
to seek designation for the school as a STEM school equivalent 305
under section 3326.032 of the Revised Code; 306

(27) That the school's attendance and participation 307

policies will be available for public inspection; 308

(28) That the school's attendance and participation 309
records shall be made available to the department, auditor of 310
state, and school's sponsor to the extent permitted under and in 311
accordance with the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act 312
of 1974," 88 Stat. 571, 20 U.S.C. 1232g, as amended, and any 313
regulations promulgated under that act, and section 3319.321 of 314
the Revised Code; 315

(29) If a school operates using the blended learning 316
model, as defined in section 3301.079 of the Revised Code, all 317
of the following information: 318

(a) An indication of what blended learning model or models 319
will be used; 320

(b) A description of how student instructional needs will 321
be determined and documented; 322

(c) The method to be used for determining competency, 323
granting credit, and promoting students to a higher grade level; 324

(d) The school's attendance requirements, including how 325
the school will document participation in learning 326
opportunities; 327

(e) A statement describing how student progress will be 328
monitored; 329

(f) A statement describing how private student data will 330
be protected; 331

(g) A description of the professional development 332
activities that will be offered to teachers. 333

(30) A provision requiring that all moneys the school's 334

operator loans to the school, including facilities loans or cash 335
flow assistance, must be accounted for, documented, and bear 336
interest at a fair market rate; 337

(31) A provision requiring that, if the governing 338
authority contracts with an attorney, accountant, or entity 339
specializing in audits, the attorney, accountant, or entity 340
shall be independent from the operator with which the school has 341
contracted. 342

(32) A provision requiring the governing authority to 343
adopt an enrollment and attendance policy that requires a 344
student's parent to notify the community school in which the 345
student is enrolled when there is a change in the location of 346
the parent's or student's primary residence. 347

(33) A provision requiring the governing authority to 348
adopt a student residence and address verification policy for 349
students enrolling in or attending the school. 350

(34) A provision establishing the process by which the 351
governing authority of the school will be selected in the 352
future. 353

(35) A description of the management and administration of 354
the school. 355

(36) A provision requiring the governing authority to 356
adopt policies and procedures to establish internal financial 357
controls for the school. 358

(B) A contract entered into under section 3314.02 of the 359
Revised Code between a sponsor and the governing authority of a 360
community school may provide for the community school governing 361
authority to make payments to the sponsor, which is hereby 362
authorized to receive such payments as set forth in the contract 363

between the governing authority and the sponsor. The total 364
amount of such payments for monitoring, oversight, and technical 365
assistance of the school shall not exceed three per cent of the 366
total amount of payments for operating expenses that the school 367
receives from the state. 368

(C) The contract shall specify the duties of the sponsor 369
which shall be in accordance with the written agreement entered 370
into with the department under division (B) of section 3314.015 371
of the Revised Code and shall include the following: 372

(1) Monitor the community school's compliance with all 373
laws applicable to the school and with the terms of the 374
contract; 375

(2) Monitor and evaluate the academic and fiscal 376
performance and the organization and operation of the community 377
school on at least an annual basis; 378

(3) Provide technical assistance to the community school 379
in complying with laws applicable to the school and terms of the 380
contract; 381

(4) Take steps to intervene in the school's operation to 382
correct problems in the school's overall performance, declare 383
the school to be on probationary status pursuant to section 384
3314.073 of the Revised Code, suspend the operation of the 385
school pursuant to section 3314.072 of the Revised Code, or 386
terminate the contract of the school pursuant to section 3314.07 387
of the Revised Code as determined necessary by the sponsor; 388

(5) Have in place a plan of action to be undertaken in the 389
event the community school experiences financial difficulties or 390
closes prior to the end of a school year. 391

(D) Upon the expiration of a contract entered into under 392

this section, the sponsor of a community school may, with the 393
approval of the governing authority of the school, renew that 394
contract for a period of time determined by the sponsor, but not 395
ending earlier than the end of any school year, if the sponsor 396
finds that the school's compliance with applicable laws and 397
terms of the contract and the school's progress in meeting the 398
academic goals prescribed in the contract have been 399
satisfactory. Any contract that is renewed under this division 400
remains subject to the provisions of sections 3314.07, 3314.072, 401
and 3314.073 of the Revised Code. 402

(E) If a community school fails to open for operation 403
within one year after the contract entered into under this 404
section is adopted pursuant to division (D) of section 3314.02 405
of the Revised Code or permanently closes prior to the 406
expiration of the contract, the contract shall be void and the 407
school shall not enter into a contract with any other sponsor. A 408
school shall not be considered permanently closed because the 409
operations of the school have been suspended pursuant to section 410
3314.072 of the Revised Code. 411

Sec. 3326.11. Each science, technology, engineering, and 412
mathematics school established under this chapter and its 413
governing body shall comply with sections 9.90, 9.91, 109.65, 414
121.22, 149.43, 2151.357, 2151.421, 2313.19, 2921.42, 2921.43, 415
3301.0714, 3301.0715, 3301.0729, 3301.24, 3301.948, 3302.037, 416
3313.14, 3313.15, 3313.16, 3313.18, 3313.201, 3313.26, 3313.472, 417
3313.473, 3313.474, 3313.475, 3313.48, 3313.481, 3313.482, 418
3313.50, 3313.539, 3313.5310, 3313.5318, 3313.5319, 3313.608, 419
3313.6012, 3313.6013, 3313.6014, 3313.6020, 3313.6021, 420
3313.6023, 3313.6024, 3313.6026, 3313.6028, 3313.6029, 421
3313.6031, 3313.61, 3313.611, 3313.614, 3313.615, 3313.617, 422
3313.618, 3313.6114, 3313.643, 3313.648, 3313.6411, 3313.6413, 423

3313.66, 3313.661, 3313.662, 3313.666, 3313.667, 3313.668, 424
3313.669, 3313.6610, 3313.67, 3313.671, 3313.672, 3313.673, 425
3313.69, 3313.71, 3313.716, 3313.717, 3313.718, 3313.719, 426
3313.7112, 3313.7117, 3313.7118, 3313.721, 3313.753, 3313.80, 427
3313.801, 3313.814, 3313.816, 3313.817, 3313.818, 3313.819, 428
3313.86, 3313.89, 3313.96, 3319.073, 3319.077, 3319.078, 429
3319.0812, 3319.21, 3319.238, 3319.318, 3319.32, 3319.321, 430
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3319.45, 3319.46, 3319.90, 3319.614, 3320.01, 3320.02, 3320.03, 432
3320.04, 3321.01, 3321.041, 3321.05, 3321.13, 3321.14, 3321.141, 433
3321.17, 3321.18, 3321.19, 3321.191, 3322.20, 3322.24, 3323.251, 434
3327.10, 4111.17, 4113.52, 5502.262, 5502.703, and 5705.391 and 435
Chapters 102., 117., 1347., 2744., 3307., 3309., 3365., 3742., 436
4112., 4123., 4141., and 4167. of the Revised Code as if it were 437
a school district. 438

Section 2. That existing sections 3314.03 and 3326.11 of 439
the Revised Code are hereby repealed. 440

Section 3. This act shall be known as the School Chaplain 441
Act. 442