

Ohio lawmakers want to require all public schools to take daily moment of silence

By **Donovan Hunt**
Columbus Dispatch

A bipartisan group of Ohio lawmakers want to require all public schools to take daily a moment of silence.

A [law from 2020](#) allowed school boards in Ohio to provide a moment of silence for prayer, reflection or meditation for a moral, patriotic or philosophical reasons. A newly introduced bill would require all public schools do this every day class is in session.

If [House Bill 187](#) becomes law, the moment of silence would not be for a set amount of time and could be done at any time in the day.

"Our kids are bombarded with outside messaging. I mean they're on their phones with media. They've always got Air Pods in listening to music or watching television, or in a crowd, or even if it's their teachers or their parents," Rep. Gary Click, R-Vickery and one of the bill's sponsors said. "I'm not saying that they're all bad influences, but there's just messaging coming at them all the time, and very seldom does a young person just get time to be mindful."

Opponents of this legislation say the intention is to put prayer into public schools. President of the Ohio Education Association, the largest teachers' union in the state, Scott DiMauro said the union is opposed to this kind of legislation. He says it takes away from the school board's right to choose if it wants a moment of silence and has concerns about the state government imposing religion on students.

"I think [religion being brought to public school is] a trend that is happening more and more. And in a pluralistic society like ours, we have to protect the freedom of all students and all people who work in schools to exercise their religious beliefs while at the same time paying attention to the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from imposing any religion on people," DiMauro said.

DiMauro said bills like this are ultimately a distraction and the state government should focus on fully funding public schools.

The same bill was [introduced](#) in 2023 without Democrat support and did not make it out of committee.

Rep. Eric Synenberg, D-Beachwood, said he is not concerned about the bill violating the First Amendment because students would not be required to pray during the moment of silence since it does not promote any specific religion.

"People have to stop being afraid of God. We're afraid God's going to sneak in here. Well, God's already here, and people are already praying," Click said. "The school is not going to inject religion into society. It's just a matter of freedom."

Click said if schools abused the moment of silence to impose religion, they already would because it is currently optional.

Other states including Florida, Arizona and Arkansas passed bills in recent years requiring moments of silence at the beginning of the day.

The Kentucky Legislature passed a moment of silence bill that is currently on Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's desk. That bill also includes a requirement to allow students at least one hour of release time from school for "moral instruction."

Lawmakers in Ohio [introduced](#) another bill with bipartisan support last month that would start every day in public schools with the Pledge of Allegiance.