



Society for Humanistic Judaism

Judaism Beyond God

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To the New York State Assembly and Senate:

We the undersigned secular and humanistic organizations believe that children have a fundamental human right to receive a quality education in secular subjects such as of English language, mathematics, science, history, and social studies that builds their capacity to become productive members of society and achieve their full potential. It is harmful to children and antithetical to the humanistic values of personal dignity and individual autonomy when children receive a substandard core secular curriculum. We believe government has a responsibility to enforce these secular core standards. While freedom of religion is a central tenet of democracy, it should not infringe on secular education that is fundamental to human progress and dignity.

The Chancellor of NYC schools has documented that many yeshivas are not providing educational equivalency while many others are not cooperating with efforts to determine equivalency. Without access to a core secular curriculum, students are deprived of the tools needed to make a living, provide for their families, become independent of state assistance, and participate as functioning citizens in a democratic society. While we respect the primacy of Judaic studies and the unique cultural and religious values within the yeshiva communities, we nevertheless maintain that religious schools must provide secular instruction that is substantially equivalent to what is offered in the public schools.

Therefore, we the undersigned secular and humanistic organizations implore New York's legislature to rescind the Felder Amendment, which became effective April 12, 2018, that weakens requirements for substantially equivalent basic secular instruction to students in private ultra-orthodox Jewish schools. To this end, we support the Young Advocates for Fair Education (YAFFED)'s lawsuit that argues that the Felder Amendment is unconstitutional as a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and must be rescinded. In the absence of this result, we urge the New York State legislature on its own to rescind the Felder Amendment and urge New York's Department of Education to enforce its core secular educational standards for all schools, including yeshivas. Additionally, we implore New York's Commissioner of Education to strengthen oversight and enforcement of state laws that require educational equivalency in non-public schools.

Signed on behalf of the below organizations:

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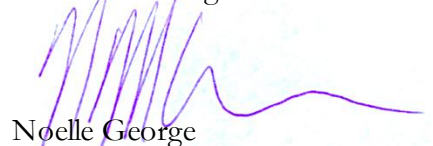
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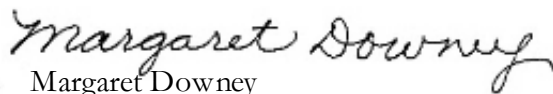
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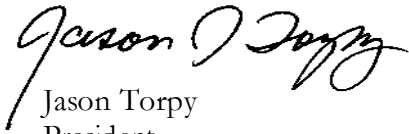
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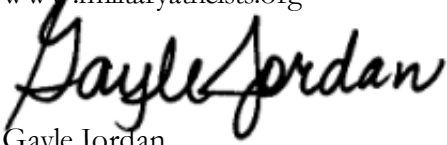


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