

2012 SESSION

INTRODUCED

12103965D

HOUSE BILL NO. 1207

Offered January 19, 2012

A *BILL to protect the right of students to assert conscientious objection to any requirement of an academic degree program in an institution of higher education; liability.*

Patrons—Pogge and Cole

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *No public or private institution of higher learning shall expel, suspend, punish, penalize, discipline, deny academic credit to, require participation in a remediation program for, or discriminate against a student because he refuses to perform academic coursework or any other degree requirement on the grounds that it would force him to violate a sincerely held religious belief.*

§ 2. *The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall not recognize any accrediting agency that denies full accreditation to, or otherwise takes any adverse action against, an academic program in any institution of higher learning in the Commonwealth because the institution exempts students from academic coursework or a degree requirement that would force any student to violate his sincerely held religious beliefs.*

§ 3. *The Attorney General or any student, prospective student, or former student aggrieved under this act may bring a civil action against the institution of higher learning, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, or the relevant accrediting agency for damages, injunctive and declaratory relief, and any other relief authorized by law and shall be entitled to reasonable attorney fees and costs if that party substantially prevails on the merits of an action brought under this section.*

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