

Separation of Church and State

Julie Friedman

The separation of Church and State is protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This historical, fundamental tenet safeguards individuals' rights to practice their faith freely while preventing the government from endorsing or favoring any particular religion.

The historical intent of our Founders has been reinforced by subsequent law; the prohibition against the imposition of a state-sponsored religion is a basic principle of inclusivity and respect in our public institutions, including our public educational system.

Senior Florida officials and their cohorts are advocating an abrogation of the First Amendment, promoting their own dogmatic personal convictions over law.

Chaplains provide an estimable service to children and families, in the context of their religion. However, placing avowed religious adherents in positions of counseling vulnerable students in public schools is bad policy, no matter the vetting process. Upholding students' rights to practice their faith while safeguarding against coercion or proselytization is a vital concern.

Far predating the establishment of the USA, the Jewish community's strong commitment to the separation of church and state derives from centuries of suffering religious persecution when governments were dominated by particular religions.

Christian Resources affirms that, " the separation of church and state remains a foundational principle that continues to inform and guide the development of inclusive, respectful, and secular educational environments. By upholding these principles, public schools strive to cultivate an atmosphere that nurtures intellectual growth, ethical development, and cultural appreciation while respecting the diverse religious landscape of

society.” <https://christian.net/theology-and-spirituality/how-does-separation-of-church-and-state-affect-schools/>

Julie Friedman, Vice President
Suncoast Jewish Alliance
August 25, 2024