

**R277-700. The Elementary and Secondary School General
Core.**

**Public Comment
Updated October 23, 2023**

From: NaKy Steah <nakysteah31@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 9:35 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: R277-700

To Whom it may concern,

I am for R277-700 being amended as long as it aligns with the Utah laws that are already in place and with the Utah Constitution which reads that a student or parent may refrain from participation consistent with section 5 3G - 10 - 205. It is pretty clear that preserving those rights are at the utmost importance.

I have seen first hands the negative mental and emotional load it causes to a child when a Teacher and Administration take it up on themselves to introduce non-core academic curriculum to their class and expects their students to be open about it with the expectation of not sharing it with their parents when it goes against family values and then act surprised when a parent questions and calls out the discrepancy and no transparency. Transparency in the Schools is a Must and informing, working and listening to Parents is important for the well being of their Children.

Ms Steah

From: Debbie Hong <debhong@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2023 1:24 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Support for R 277-700-7 as currently amended

I am writing to support the "rule of conscience" R277-700-7 as amended by Councilmember Wood. I feel that education does not have to agree with ones beliefs, and it is important to learn about different ideas. I feel that the rule allows parents and students to opt out, but also complete an assignment of their choice, but shows mastery of the subject. It is also important that we make graduation requirements are equal.

Thank you,
Debbie Hong

10992 Lake Island Dr, South Jordan, UT 84009

From: A. CLAWSON <ACLAWSON52@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 8:32 AM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Amend R277-700

Please amend R277-700 to adopt the USBE's staff draft 1 which does align with the law and the Utah Constitution.

Thank you

April Clawson

From: Elizabeth Jewkes <lizcunha8@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 1:08 PM
To: Prideaux, Cybil <Cybil.Prideaux@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Public Comment request on Monday 10/23/2023

Dear USBE Secretary,

I respectfully request an opportunity to speak in the public hearing to be held on Monday 10/23/2023 regarding the board's approval of Draft 4 amendment to Rule R277-700-7(4). I oppose this amendment because the board doesn't have the authority to make this change and it does not comply with the law nor the Utah Constitution. As the rule stands, it protects the rights of conscience and religious beliefs of the individual. If Draft 4 amendment is approved and retained, it will infringe on the constitutional rights of the individual and the State Board of Education will have broken the law established by our state legislators. I recommend that the rule should only be amended to read: "A student or parent may refrain from participation consistent with Section 53G-10-205." I have personal experiences I would like to share with the board regarding this issue. I would like to explain this clearly in the hearing.

Respectfully yours,

Elizabeth Jewkes
1619 East 500 South
Spanish Fork, Utah 84660

From: Marilyn Larson <marilynlarson21@outlook.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 9:09 AM
To: Prideaux, Cybil <Cybil.Prideaux@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Hearing on Monday for R277-700 . I am opposed to the amendment

Marilyn Larson

From: kscott364 <kscott364@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 4:09 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: No to r277-700

To Whom it May Concern,

I'm writing today to express my disapproval of the amendment that is trying to be added to clarify and update the rules due to HB348 specifically 53G-10-205. The law specifically states "shall not be infringed" when it comes to a parent or student opting out of something based on their conscience or religious belief. Shall not means without restrictions. The proposed amendment puts restrictions on the parents.

I understand the concern is that if a parent opts a child out of a complete topic but the child still gets to move onto the next grade this will make our state standards null. As a former teacher in Utah with students that were passed to me year after year not able to read anywhere near the grade level standard, and no ability to hold students back because of what that does to their mental health, I can already say the standards are not being met regularly but kids are being moved from grade to grade. Many are even graduating because a D in English is still passing enough to receive a diploma.

Schools are turning into places where only one side of an argument is presented as fact. Parents should have the right to say no, that's not what a family believes and unless the law is changed the school board does not have the right to add stipulations to a child being opted out of a topic. This does create confusion in the classrooms but if a teacher is doing their job right and presenting all sides of a topic, they shouldn't have much of a problem.

This amendment violates the law by requiring the parent to later agree to a reasonable alternative, but reasonable is not defined and is a very subjective term.

The burden to create well balanced assignments that meet the state standards is on the teacher. It is very easy to create these assignments and to present both sides of an argument that won't infringe on a parent or students conscience. My students should never know where I stand religiously or politically. As a teacher I should know both sides of an argument and be able to talk my students in circles. I should be able to communicate to my parents in a manner that shows then I support them and will keep my personal beliefs out of the classroom. That I am there to help them teach their kids the basics about

math, literature, being good humans, and support the parents by allowing them to teach the morals and values.

Schools are taking on more and more parent responsibilities, which is why we are seeing this clash. If schools will go back to being schools that support families, instead of places that attempt to raise children for the family, our society would see a positive change and these contentious fights between schools and parents would calm down immensely. That is why I am asking that you not support this amendment.

Thank you Kierson Scott

From: cherylruns <cherylruns@comcast.net>

Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 4:55 PM

To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>; Audit & Fraud <audit@schools.utah.gov>; Cline, Natalie <nataliecline.education@gmail.com>; Prideaux, Cybil <Cybil.Prideaux@schools.utah.gov>

Subject: Right of conscience

Dear USBE,

Please listen to the parents, students, educators and fellow board members when we speak for our children as they can not speak for themselves on this matter without retaliation while at school.

Our students should always be able to say NO and leave if a lecture, educator or administrative person speaks or behaves in a manner that violates their conscience, makes them anxious, depressed, ill, or goes against their personal beliefs.

Students in Utah public schools should be allowed a safe learning environment where the US constitution, Utah State Law and their God given rights are upheld and safe guarded.

"The rights of conscience shall never be infringed. Respecting the rights of conscience and religious beliefs is a foundational principle of a civilized society"

I personally have reported over 6 educators to my district and USBE who are violating Utah State Law and violating the students moral beliefs. My district has done nothing to stop these violations from occurring and have no punishments for the educators, the only defense our students have is to say NO and leave the classroom, they should be allowed to do so without fear of retaliation or punishment. They should be allowed to call their parents and have their parents become involved to support the student should their learning environment become toxic, unsafe or otherwise go against their morals and beliefs.

A few examples I personally have witnessed and reported which has lead to retaliation against me. I will share here as a reference for why this is so important for our students.

Sept 2022 at THS in Orem. Classroom had 16 titles from a list of 52 titles that ASD had determined needed parental consent to view and should have been labeled and rescripted from all students who did not have parental consent. These titles were found throughout the classroom and were accessible to all who entered the classroom. I was instructed as the substitute to have the students read from these titles for the majority of the lecture time. I had many students complain to me how these titles were making them anxious, depressed and ill. Students were bullied and punished if they did not continue reading from these titles for book clubs throughout the district. They should be allowed to say NO and not have their grades docked for rejecting books that contain pornography, explicit content, drugs and violence.

Feb 2023 SHS Lehi UT students using a classroom that is accessible to parents, students and younger siblings during school hours as a changing room for all genders for a school play. Students were stripping down to bras and underwear. A male student was dressed in a female jumpsuit which exposed his erect penis, he wore this outfit during the play and was hugging and grinding on students from elementary schools in the district which made the high school students as well as the elementary students very anxious and uncomfortable. They complained to educators while this was happening and were not able to leave class or call their parents.

They should have been able to call their parents and leave the play and a safe changing area outside of the classroom should have been provided, students should have been able to leave when their morals were violated.

March 2023 MVHS Orem UT. Educator uses his lecture time to discuss his sexual fetishes, cross dressing, raves, drug use, hormones, therapy sessions and son's mental health with multiple classrooms and students. Many students asked to leave because of their PTSD, anxiety, depression and mental health, they did not feel safe while this educator used the lecture to discuss how entraining this was for him. Many asked to be treated in the "wellness room", they should have been given an alternative lesson to "teen dreams", allowed to call their parents and excused from these lectures.

April 2023 SHS using lectures and classroom to encourage students to protest, speak in board meetings, bully and threaten those who did not want sexual flags, nudity, explicit sexual content and books discussed in her classroom. These students complained about how her classroom made them feel anxious and depressed. They should have been allowed to have a classroom free from pornography, politics and harmful content, but they were harassed and bullied if they did not allow this educator to use her classroom to push her agenda on them.

These are just a few examples of what our students face daily, their only defense is to say NO, leave the classroom and call their parents. Please protect our students and allow them to be free from punishment if they feel their morals, beliefs and conscience are being violated during school hours by educators.

Thank you for hearing from a concerned parent and educator,

Cheryl

From: Delitra Talbot <delitratalbot1@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 4:59 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>; Cline, Natalie <Natalie.Cline@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Please Oppose amendment R277-700-7(4)

I am OPPOSED to the amendment to R277-700-7(4) which infringes on student conscience and religious belief. If what is being taught in my child's classroom is not truth, my child should have the ability to say something, walk out, without consequences. Parents are the over-arching authority on how their children are to be taught. Thank you for your time. Delitra Talbot

From: Kelly Eggertsen <kellyathompson@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 5:15 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>; Cline, Natalie <Natalie.Cline@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Against R277-700 as amended

To Whom It May Concern,

I am against the amendment to rule R277-700 as amended. It infringes on student and parent conscience. The USBE does not have the authority to make this rule which does not comply with the law or the Utah Constitution. Please stand for freedom and respect parental authority and the consciences of students.

Thank you,
Kelly Eggertsen
3256 North 960 E.
Lehi, Utah 84043

From: kscott364 <kscott364@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 4:09 PM

To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>

Subject: No to r277-700

To Whom it May Concern,

I'm writing today to express my disapproval of the amendment that is trying to be added to clarify and update the rules due to HB348 specifically 53G-10-205. The law specifically states "shall not be infringed" when it comes to a parent or student opting out of something based on their conscience or religious belief. Shall not means without restrictions. The proposed amendment puts restrictions on the parents.

I understand the concern is that if a parent opts a child out of a complete topic but the child still gets to move onto the next grade this will make our state standards null. As a former teacher in Utah with students that were passed to me year after year not able to read anywhere near the grade level standard, and no ability to hold students back because of what that does to their mental health, I can already say the standards are not being met regularly but kids are being moved from grade to grade. Many are even graduating because a D in English is still passing enough to receive a diploma.

Schools are turning into places where only one side of an argument is presented as fact. Parents should have the right to say no, that's not what a family believes and unless the law is changed the school board does not have the right to add stipulations to a child being opted out of a topic. This does create confusion in the classrooms but if a teacher is doing their job right and presenting all sides of a topic, they shouldn't have much of a problem.

This amendment violates the law by requiring the parent to later agree to a reasonable alternative, but reasonable is not defined and is a very subjective term.

The burden to create well balanced assignments that meet the state standards is on the teacher. It is very easy to create these assignments and to present both sides of an argument that won't infringe on a parent or students conscience. My students should never know where I stand religiously or politically. As a teacher I should know both sides of an argument and be able to talk my students in circles. I should be able to communicate to my parents in a manner that shows then I support them and will keep my personal beliefs out of the classroom. That I am there to help them teach their kids the basics about math, Literature, being good humans, and support the parents by allowing them to teach the morals and values.

Schools are taking on more and more parent responsibilities, which is why we are seeing this clash. If schools will go back to being schools that support families, instead of places that attempt to raise children for the family, our society would see a positive change and these contentious fights between schools and parents would calmedown immensely. That is why I am asking that you not support this amendment.

Thank you Kiersron Scott

From: Glenda Winsett <gandjcleaningllc@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 9:38 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Oppose amendment to R277-700-7(4)

Y'all need to get it together!

From: Rozelle <rozelle19@protonmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 21, 2023 10:32 AM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Opposition to R277-700

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in opposition of the proposed rule R277-700-7(4) which does NOT comply with the law or the Utah Constitution (Article I, Section 4 [Religious liberty.]) and which infringes on the rights of parents whose "primary responsibility" is to educate their own children and "the role of state and local governments is to support and assist parents in fulfilling that responsibility;" 53G-10-204

In section 4 of R277-700-7. Student Mastery and Assessment of Core Standards, it states

"IF A STUDENT REFRAINS FROM A PORTION OF A COURSE OR TO A COURSE IN ITS ENTIRETY UNDER SECTION 53G-10-205, THE PARENT AND SCHOOL SHALL WORK TOGETHER TO ESTABLISH A REASONABLE ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION, WHICH ALLOWS THE STUDENT TO DEMONSTRATE MASTERY OF CORE STANDARDS, CONSISTENT WITH 53G-6-803 AND 53G-10-205(2)(B) PRIOR TO THE STUDENT'S PROMOTION TO THE NEXT COURSE OR GRADE LEVEL"

This puts the rights of the state ahead of the rights of the parents.

Who defines what is a "reasonable academic accommodation"?

If a Core Standard is in violation of a parent's or child's conscience what's the recourse for the parent or child to exercise their right of conscience or religious belief when the objective is to "demonstrate mastery of the Core Standards"

At the very least, this opens the door to an abuse of power coming from the state upon parents and students and should be stopped immediately.

HB 348 passed unanimously. The USBE should follow the law and not flex their power-hungry muscles

to impose more control on the education of our children and on the rights of parents.

Do not be party to the erasure of our fundamental rights of conscience and religious liberty by implementing this rule.

sincerely,

Rozelle Hansen

From: Nicole MacPherson <macp.nicole@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 21, 2023 4:41 PM
To: Cline, Natalie <Natalie.Cline@schools.utah.gov>
Cc: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: Amendment to Rule R277-700-7(4)

I am against the amendment. When you took your place on the school board, I believe you swore an oath to uphold the Utah Constitution, where in Article 1, Section 4 it states "The rights of conscience shall never be infringed." What if the parent and school can't agree on a "reasonable alternative"? What if the core standard is what goes against the student's and parent's conscience? As parents, we are very passionate and protective of our children, as we should be. Stop trying to give schools the power to "trump" parents' decisions about our own children.

Sincerely,

Nicole MacPherson

From: R Colley <r3colley@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 22, 2023 7:58 AM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Cc: Earl, Jennie <Jennie.Earl@schools.utah.gov>; Kerry, Joseph <Joseph.Kerry@schools.utah.gov>; Strate, Brent <Brent.Strate@schools.utah.gov>; Wood, LeAnn <LeAnn.Wood@schools.utah.gov>; Reale, Sarah <Sarah.Reale@schools.utah.gov>; Lear, Carol <Carol.Lear@schools.utah.gov>; Hart, Molly <Molly.Hart@schools.utah.gov>; Boggess, Christina <Christina.Boggess@schools.utah.gov>; Cline,

Natalie <Natalie.Cline@schools.utah.gov>; Hymas, Matt <Matt.Hymas@schools.utah.gov>; Davis, Cindy <Cindy.Davis@schools.utah.gov>; Moss, James <James.Moss@schools.utah.gov>; Boothe, Randy <Randy.Boothe@schools.utah.gov>; Green, Emily <Emily.Green@schools.utah.gov>; Norton, Kristan <Kristan.Norton@schools.utah.gov>

Subject: Rule R277-700-7(4) - Comment for Public Hearing scheduled for Monday, October 23, 2023

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in opposition of proposed rule R277-700-7(4) which does not comply with the law or the Utah Constitution (Article 1, Section 4: "The rights of conscience shall never be infringed"). You may recall HB348 passed unanimously and I ask that the USBE follow the law and refrain from exerting more control on the education of our children and on the rights of parents. Parents carry the primary responsibility to educate their own children and "the role of state and local government is to support and assist parents in fulfilling that responsibility;" 53G-10-204.

Further, students in Utah public schools should be allowed a safe learning environment where the US Constitution, Utah State Law, and their God-given rights are safeguarded and upheld by the USBE whose responsibility it is to remember that "The rights of conscience shall never be infringed. Respecting the rights of conscience and religious beliefs is a foundation principle of a civilized society."

Section 4 of R277-700-7 Student Mastery and Assessment of Core Standards puts the rights of the State ahead of the rights of the parents and opens the door for potential abuse of power by the USBE/State upon parents and students and should cease immediately. Please exercise extreme caution as you fulfill your role - you may unwittingly (or perhaps with intent) promote the erasure of our fundamental rights of conscience and religious liberty by implementing the proposed rule.

The USBE, upon counsel from the Attorney General's office in 2019, asserted that **it did not** have the "authority or expertise" to provide legal guidance in the form of administrative rules on constitutional issues. Thus it could not issue rules concerning the constitutional rights of students. Obviously, the USBE should not be writing administrative rules on constitutional issues, but rather it should defer to statute and the state and U.S. Constitution as the final authority on conscience and religious belief.

A child's conscience matters, please protect it.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Colley

Sandy, Utah

From: Ambrea Banagas <ambreabanagas@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, October 22, 2023 12:02 PM

To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>

Subject: NO for R277-700 AS AMENDED.

I'm writing to request that the board amend R277-700 to adopt the USBE staff's draft 1, which aligns with the law and with the Utah constitution which reads:

~ A STUDENT OR PARENT MAY REFRAIN FROM PARTICIPATION CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 53G-10-205 ~

Please protect right of conscience for parents and students.

Thank you,

Ambrea Bañagas

Highland, UT

From: **Frank & Kendra Schofield** <schofiefam@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Oct 22, 2023 at 3:12 PM

Subject: R277-700

To: <Rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>

Dear USBE Board,

I am writing in support of the proposed amendment to R277-700. I believe this amendment aligns with current state law, and actually strengthens the protections of parent and student rights.

The current Utah law states that an LEA (charter school or school district) may assign an alternative task when a student claims the original assignment violates their right of conscience, but the parent is not required to be part of the discussion (although a collaborative discussion is the typical practice when these situations arise). The draft amendment language explicitly states that the school and parent work together to determine an appropriate alternative task that still allows the student to demonstrate their knowledge of the relevant state learning standards, while maintaining the student's right of conscience.

Please vote in support of the amendment.

Sincerely,

Frank Schofield

From: D. Gatrell <dlgatrell@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 22, 2023 8:42 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: R277-700. The Elementary and Secondary School General Core.

Board members -

I support the amendment to section 7(4) in the approved draft R277-700 General Core rule. It is extremely important that parents work with schools to identify a way for students to demonstrate mastery of core standards when they refrain from participation in any aspect of learning for reasons of religion or conscience.

Let me tell you a true story to illustrate why.

Several years ago, a freshman student was assigned to one of my Geography sections who, I was told, had been home schooled up to that point. This was not concerning at first, as I have a number of friends and relatives who were successfully home schooled. However, after a few weeks, I realized she could not read and that was why she was not turning in work unless she sat with a friend who could "help" her. I contacted the parent with my concern, suggesting the student might come after school for some additional help, which I would gladly provide.

Next thing I knew, the student was withdrawn from my class. I checked the Student Information System and discovered she had disappeared from the school, so I asked our Registrar what happened.

I was horrified to learn the student's parent had produced a certificate stating my student had completed all requirements necessary for graduation. Just like that. No discussion, no demonstration of content mastery or even competency. She was just gone.

That young freshman would be 22 now and I still worry about her.

Most parents are great. Most students are wonderful. But the fact remains there are those who will abuse a system if given the opportunity. As amended, the rule encourages collaboration to ensure students are prepared before they move to the next level in any content area. That is reasonable.

Failing to ensure competency before promotion is setting students up to fail in the future due to critical gaps in learning.

Thank you,

Deborah Gatrell, NBCT

From: Quinn Kotter <quinn.kotter.house@outlook.com>
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 1:32 PM
To: Board Rule Comments <rule.comments@schools.utah.gov>; Cline, Natalie <Natalie.Cline@schools.utah.gov>
Subject: 2023 HB348 (Participation Waiver Amendments) and Rule R277-700

Utah State Board of Education:

Good afternoon.

I am writing to re-iterate the Utah State Constitution, Article 1, Section 4 [Religious Liberty]. The first sentence declares that, "The rights of conscience shall never be infringed."

In the UT 2023 Legislative session, HB348 (Participation Waiver Amendments) was passed to reinforce that declaration for students in schools. It primarily affected Utah Law Code 53G-10-205.

I urge the board to adopt the Draft 1 amendment of rule R277-700-7(4), which, as amended with Draft 1, would read, "A student or parent may refrain from participation consistent with Section 53G-10-205."

This is a simple and clear statement that allows the law (HB348) to govern, which is what is intended in a Republic.

Thank you kindly for reading my comments.

Quinn Kotter

Resident of Granite Precinct 5

3247 S. Park Springs Dr.

West Valley City, UT 84120

(801)440-7260