

## **Proclamation in Support of Religious and Philosophical Student Exemption from Gender Identity Curriculum and Content**

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WHEREAS the Natick Public Schools Policy Manual recognizes the duty of the Natick School Committee to “vote and act in Committee without bias for the good of the students”; and

WHEREAS protection and support for religious groups and religious freedoms is guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution and for protected classes in the state of Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS the U.S. Constitution says Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion or abridging the freedom of speech; and

WHEREAS freedom of religion is recognized as both a civil right and a civil liberty and is protected under the Constitution and under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 from being the basis of discriminatory practices; and

WHEREAS Natick Public Schools has the discretion to provide a religious and philosophical exemption for students whose moral and religious beliefs, values and ideas deeply conflict with the schools’ instruction on gender identity; and

WHEREAS there is no federal or state law that prohibits Natick Public Schools from offering such an exemption for students; and

WHEREAS the Natick Public Schools Policy Manual recognizes the right of parents to opt their children out of objectionable materials. Policy IHAM-R allows students or their parents to opt out of health instruction “on the grounds that the material taught is contrary to the religious beliefs and/or teachings of the student or the student's parent/guardian;” and

WHEREAS policy KEC indicates that Natick Public Schools gives substantial deference to parental rights by granting parents the option to exempt their children from certain instructional materials that conflict with their beliefs; and

WHEREAS Natick Public Schools recognizes the importance of equity and inclusion and where religious groups and religious beliefs are on equal footing with secular ones; and

WHEREAS everyone should be able to live without fear of prejudice, discrimination, violence, or hatred based on religion and the freedom to practice their religious beliefs, and that right should be acknowledged at all levels of public education; and

**WHEREAS** the School Committee and Natick Public Schools are also committed to honoring, valuing and affirming religious students and families through its policies, practices, and curriculum; and

**WHEREAS** the Natick Public Schools, the School Committee and staff stand by Judeo-Christian, Orthodox Jewish, Coptic Orthodox, Muslim, and other religious students and take seriously its responsibility to provide safe, nondiscriminatory, and inclusive environments for people of all religions as they reflect our diverse community; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED** that Natick Public Schools will allow students religious and philosophical exemption from all gender identity curriculum and content, including surveys, lessons, events, school assemblies, assigned reading, and other instructional activities and programs.