



Ron DeSantis

46th Governor of Florida



- [Home](#)
- [Governor DeSantis](#)
- [First Lady DeSantis](#)
- [Lt. Gov. Nuñez](#)
- [Media](#)
- [Info Center](#)
- [Judicial](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Español](#)

[Governor Ron DeSantis Receives Four Bills from the Florida Legislature](#) [Governor Ron DeSantis Reappoints Dr. Anup Patel to the Florida State Boxing Commission](#)

Governor Ron DeSantis Signs Legislation to Protect Religious Freedom and Support Florida's Jewish Community

On June 14, 2021, in [News Releases](#), by Staff

SURFSIDE, Fla. — Today, Governor Ron DeSantis was joined by members of the Florida Legislature and leaders in the Jewish community at the Shul of Bal Harbour to sign HB 529 and HB 805. HB 805 ensures that volunteer ambulance services, including Hatzalah, a free emergency transport service operating in South Florida, can operate. HB 529 requires Florida schools to hold a daily moment of silence.

Governor DeSantis also highlighted initiatives included in the Florida Leads Budget to support Florida's Jewish community and Israel, including:

- \$4 million in security funding for Florida's Jewish Day Schools, including for the first time ever funding for professional security
- \$1.35 million for the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Pete
- \$400,000 for the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach
- \$100,000 for the Holocaust Task Force
- \$250,000 for the Florida-Israel Business Accelerator
- \$1 million in recurring funds for collaborative research, development, and commercialization of projects related to aerospace and other technology through a memorandum of understanding which Space Florida has entered into with Israel

"Every family in our state should be able to send their children to school and know that they will be protected from harm and be able to practice their faith," said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. "I'm proud to sign these bills today to help protect religious freedom in Florida and increase the safety and security of our Jewish communities. I will continue to make sure that in Florida we root out anti-semitism, and that every day we show our support for Israel and our Jewish communities."

"We know that many children struggle with mental health issues, which impact them, their families, and their schools most of all," said **Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran**. "HB 529 empowers families to begin those ongoing conversations with their child on what they might reflect on during the moment of silence, and help them use this time as an opportunity to prepare for the upcoming day."

"In this often times frantic pace of modern life, students need a moment to gather themselves in a quiet moment of reflection," said **Senator Dennis Baxley**. "Who knows how much a moment of silence and reflection may direct their day?"

"In this world of technological, media-driven, and societal turmoil, our children desperately need time for quiet reflection," said **Representative Randy Fine**. "Because it is in those fleeting moments that we find our higher purpose. That's why I was so proud to sponsor HB 529, to ensure that each child gets a minute at the beginning of the school day — without a TV on or a cellphone blaring — to think about the world and their place in it. It is my hope that these small moments to become emotionally centered will have a big impact on their days — and their lives."

"Hatzalah serves Jewish communities with religious sensitivities," said **Representative Mike Caruso**. "Many of their community members follow strict Jewish guidelines, only speak Yiddish or Hebrew, and some are Holocaust survivors whose religious beliefs mean that their preference is to be transported and treated by a member of their own community; someone they know. This bill simply allows orthodox Jewish paramedics and EMT's to serve and treat orthodox Jewish members of their own community under the Jewish laws of life."

"Hatzalah provides invaluable emergency service to our community, so I'm delighted that Governor DeSantis has taken the time to sign this bill here with the organization," said **Senator Jason Pizzo**.

Highlights of HB 529 include:

- Directs the principal of each public school to require teachers in first-period classrooms in all grades to set aside 1 to 2 minutes daily for a moment of silence, during which students may not interfere with other students' participation.
- This is an expansion of current law which only "encourages" a moment of "silent prayer."
- Provides that a teacher:
 - Must encourage parents to discuss the moment of silence with their children and to make suggestions as to the best use of this time.
 - May not make suggestions as to the nature of any reflection that a student may engage in during the moment of silence.

Highlights of HB 805 include:

- This bill ensures faith-based volunteer first responder services, like Hatzalah, can operate if the service has operated in Florida for at least 10 years and meets numerous other rigorous conditions.
- The bill allows authorized volunteer ambulance services to use emergency lights and sirens when responding.
- These services are critical for Holocaust survivors who have a fear of uniforms and of being taken away. Members are trained to treat patients according to Jewish law.

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