

May 12, 2026

The Honorable Matt Haney, Chair
California State Assembly
1021 O Street
Sacramento, CA 95814



Dear Assemblymember Haney:

On behalf of tens of thousands of constituents, allied organizations, and more than 2,000 churches across California, California Family Council strongly **opposes** AB 2017.

AB 2017 would add Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha as named California state holidays, authorize public school and community college closures on both days through union agreements, create a new mandatory excused absence category specifically for Eid observances, permit state employees to use paid leave for both holidays, and direct the State Board of Education to develop curriculum guides for school exercises "acknowledging and celebrating the meaning and importance" of these observances. Our objection is constitutional, principled, and grounded in a commitment to genuine religious liberty for all Californians.

California's Education Code already provides that any student may be excused for any religious holiday upon parental request. That religion-neutral framework protects every faith community equally without requiring the state to pick religious favorites. AB 2017 does not strengthen that framework. It bypasses it entirely, writing two specific Islamic holidays into state statute by name, while no Christian, Jewish, or other faith tradition's holidays have received equivalent mandatory statutory treatment in the excused absence code.¹

These are not cultural observances with incidental religious overtones. Eid al-Fitr marks the completion of Ramadan, one of the five pillars of Islam. Eid al-Adha commemorates Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son and marks the culmination of the hajj pilgrimage, itself another of the five pillars. They are explicitly theological observances rooted in Islamic doctrine.¹ Authorizing and funding school curriculum guides to celebrate their religious meaning crosses a constitutional line that accommodation of student absence does not.

In October 2025, Governor Newsom signed AB 268, making Diwali an official state holiday and authorizing public school exercises celebrating its meaning. AB 2017 follows the same template for Islam. Two bills. Two minority faith traditions. Two sets of state-commissioned school celebration exercises. Meanwhile, Christmas receives December 25 as a state holiday only because it functions as a secular scheduling anchor. Good Friday receives three hours of partial recognition. Easter receives nothing. No California statute has ever authorized public schools to hold exercises celebrating the meaning of any Christian holiday.¹ This is not a coincidence. It is a pattern.

The Maryland precedent illustrates exactly where this leads. In 2014, Montgomery County faced the same dynamic when Muslim parents sought Eid recognition equal to Yom Kippur. The

school board's response was to strip all religious references from the school calendar entirely. As Norman Gordon, an associate pastor, told the Associated Press at the time: the board "sent a message to all students that their faith is not important" and "snubbed not just one particular faith tradition, but all three."² California is walking into the same trap. Either the Legislature names every major religious holiday by statute, an unworkable proliferation, or it will eventually have to explain why it stopped where it stopped.

California is among the most religiously diverse states in the nation. If named statutory recognition is the standard, the queue includes not only Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, Yom Kippur, and Passover, but Holi, Vaisakhi, Vesak, and dozens more. The author's own rationale, that Eid deserves recognition because the Legislature already recognized Diwali, has no principled stopping point.¹

The right path is to strengthen California's existing religion-neutral accommodation framework so that every faith is protected equally, without the state commissioning curriculum guides to celebrate the theological content of any religion's holidays. AB 2017 moves California in the wrong direction.

For these reasons, California Family Council respectfully **opposes** AB 2017. We urge the Committee to reject this bill and instead pursue equal, religion-neutral accommodation that honors the religious liberty of every Californian.

Respectfully,



Greg Burt
Vice President
California Family Council

References

¹ California Family Council, "California Wants to Give Public Schools Permission to Celebrate the End of Ramadan," *CaliforniaFamily.org*, May 2026. <https://www.californiafamily.org/2026/05/california-wants-to-give-public-schools-permission-to-celebrate-the-end-of-ramadan/>

² Kelsey Harkness, "Maryland School District Removes Religious Holidays from Calendar," *The Daily Signal*, November 14, 2014. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2014/11/14/maryland-school-district-removes-religious-holidays-calendar/>

³ AB 2017 Bill Text, California Legislative Information. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260AB2017