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Governor Kay Ivey
State of Alabama
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Dear Governor Ivey, Superintendent Mackey and Board Members:

You received a recent communication from Rajan Zed, President of the Universal Society of Hinduism. Mr. Zed requested the State of Alabama to end the prohibition of teaching or practicing yoga in its public schools. As you know, yoga, along with several other religious practices are prohibited by Alabama Administrative Code Section 290-404-040-.02. I attach a copy for your convenience.

This regulation was passed for a purpose. The techniques described in it, particularly including yoga, are an integral part of the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. In recent years, the use of yoga as a part of an exercise or physical fitness routine was said to have become secularized. However, the use of yoga and the other techniques contains a spiritual dimension which is part of the relaxation and meditation process. In other words, this is practicing a religion. I attach a brief explanation from the Apologetics Resource Center entitled "Is Yoga Religion? Yes," which will be self-explanatory.

The policy must stay in effect and it must be enforced. We request that no action be taken to change this policy. Additionally, we understand a number of public schools in the State of Alabama engage students in yoga techniques. We request you inform all public schools in the state of the prohibition of the regulation and instruct them to discontinue any use of the technique in a public school program. The attached memorandum from former Superintendent Joseph B. Morton is a good example of needed action.

If the state removes the prohibition required in the regulation and/or fails to enforce it, permitting public schools to engage students in these techniques, it is violating the religious rights of those who believe differently and is the state establishing a religion. This would or does violate the religion clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the Alabama Religious Freedom Amendment.

There are those who contend the techniques have a secular purpose and that the state would be closeminded to prohibit beneficial exercises. You cannot be misled by uninformed or biased persons. The very fact that the head of a Hindu religious organization requests the policy be removed clearly shows the religious significance of it. See enclosure entitled "Universal Society of Hinduism" (www.Rajanzed.com). In all events, the greater evidence is the religious nature of the activity.

In conclusion, we request the policy not be changed and that any public schools engaged in the techniques be instructed not to do so. Please let us know your decisions. If we can assist or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston

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