STATE OF NEW YORK

8847

IN ASSEMBLY

January 18, 2024

Introduced by M. of A. ANGELINO -- read once and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations

AN ACT to amend the civil rights law, in relation to prohibiting any governmental entity from discriminating against and closing a place of worship during an emergency

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Protecting Religious Assembly in States of Emergency (PRAISE) Act".

§ 2. The civil rights law is amended by adding a new section 79-r to read as follows:

§ 79-r. Protecting religious assembly in states of emergency. 1. Protection for places of worship. Any order, rule, regulation, or other directive, issued by any governmental entity pursuant to an emergency or health or safety determination, that requires closure or limitation of any business or other facility otherwise open to public use or patronage, but which exempts in whole or in part any particular entity or set of entities, shall exempt to the same extent any place of worship entitled to the religious exemption found in Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, to the same extent as the exempt entity. This section shall be construed to afford to religious institutions and places of worship the same degree of freedom to meet as is afforded to the most favored entity or set of entities.

2. Enforcement. Any person or entity burdened or impaired by a violation of this section may bring a civil action for relief against such burden or impairment in any court of competent jurisdiction. Relief may include injunctive orders, compensatory damages, nominal damages, a declaration of a violation, and, where malice or recklessness is demonstrated, punitive damages.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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