

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR

(334) 242-7100
FAX: (334) 242-3282

STATE OF ALABAMA

February 22, 2022

Mr. Alvin Briggs
Executive Director
Alabama High School Athletic Association
P.O. Box 242367
Montgomery, AL 36124-2367

Dear Mr. Briggs:

I am writing to express my profound concern—and to get some answers—about the alleged treatment of Oakwood Adventist Academy at the Class 1A Boys' Northeast Regional Basketball Semi-Finals this past weekend.

According to news reports, the AHSAA denied Oakwood a very modest accommodation of its religious beliefs. The school's basketball team was scheduled to play at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday afternoon for a chance to make the regional finals. But for Oakwood's players and coaches, that time slot presented a problem: It conflicted with their observance of the Sabbath, from sundown Friday evening to sundown Saturday.

Although Oakwood's opponent and the two teams set to play during the 7:30 p.m. game all reportedly were willing to swap time slots, I've read that the AHSAA denied Oakwood's simple request—not once but twice. And the result, for the team, was surely agonizing: It was forced either to play a game against the dictates of its players' and coaches' faith or to forfeit the game entirely, and thereby lose the chance to continue a hard-fought and hard-earned successful season.

As I'm sure you know, few things are more important to Alabamians than their faith. And from my perspective as Governor, this is a very good thing. Sincere faith brings Alabamians together. It is a source of comfort during times of challenge. And it drives Alabamians to make their communities better. Indeed, a sincere commitment to faith is one of the defining hallmarks of our great State.

With all of this in mind, I hope you'll understand why I was most disturbed to read about Oakwood's alleged treatment at the AHSAA's basketball tournament—and why this episode raises some very pressing questions, not only for me but for public officials and citizens across our great State:

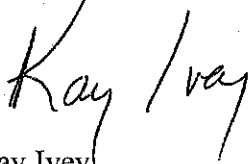
1. Is the public narrative about Oakwood's treatment accurate?
2. If so, how was this treatment allowed to occur?

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3. Which AHSAA employees were responsible for making this decision? Were any board members consulted about the decision before it was made? Were any other external stakeholders consulted before the decision was made? What discussions were had, and what communications were exchanged, by the responsible AHSAA employees before making the decision?
4. Did the decision to deny Oakwood a religious accommodation violate any existing AHSAA policies? Or was the denial of a religious accommodation for Oakwood permissible under AHSAA's existing policies?
5. Were you or other AHSAA officials aware of how Oakwood's treatment would be perceived by the Oakwood basketball team members and coaches? If not, why did you not factor this into your decision deny Oakwood a simple religious accommodation?
6. Were you or other AHSAA officials aware of how Oakwood's treatment would be perceived by the Alabama taxpayers who support and subsidize AHSAA's operations? If not, why did you not factor this into your decision to deny Oakwood a simple religious accommodation?
7. How can we as a State ensure that something like this never occurs again?

I am reaching out to Oakwood's leadership to better understand the school's and team members' perception of these troubling events. I hope that you will respond promptly as well, so that the AHSAA's views may be appropriately represented as reforms are considered in the coming days and weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kay Ivey
Governor