

H7575
Jennifer Lima
Support

I am writing in strong support of H7575, which would establish as an affirmative defense to the crimes of circulating obscene publications or shows and selling or exhibiting obscene publications to minors the person's employment status as an employee of a school, museum or library.

Currently, there is no stated protection for library workers, educators and museum professionals in Rhode Island's obscenity and harmful to minor laws. All of the other New England states have codified these protections into law.

Across the nation, with increasing frequency, librarians and educators have been subject to criminal prosecution for teaching about health and sexuality and/or circulating books with information about sex, or containing sexual or LGBTQ themes.

Without these protections spelled out in our state law, librarians and educators can become targets of harassment and even criminal penalties for the regular, normal and necessary conduct of their work.

A quick google search shows recent attempts in other states to remove these protections. This recent legislative activism to criminalize librarianship and education under obscenity laws is happening alongside efforts to marginalize and re-criminalize homosexuality, sexual freedom, and the trans community. Much of this legislative activism is driven by special interest groups who are looking to radically roll back gains in civil society and education settings for LGBTQ people.

Please act now to pass H7575 and show that Rhode Island remains a state that supports intellectual freedom and the freedom to read.

Please note that I am currently a member of the North Kingstown School Committee but I am writing today as a private citizen and the opinions expressed are my own.

Thank you for your time.

Jennifer Lima
4 Hickory Drive East
North Kingstown, RI 02852