

Re: H7575
March 21, 2024

To Committee Chair Rep. Robert Craven, First Vice Chair Carol McEntee, Second Vice Chair:
Jason Knight,

I'm writing in support of the following proposed Rhode Island legislation, 2024 -- H 7575: An Act
Relating to Criminal Offenses – Obscene and Objectionable Publications and Shows.
Introduced By: Representatives Morales, Knight, Ajello, Potter, Dawson, Kislak, Cruz,

I work as a librarian at Providence Public Library; I'm writing not as a representative of the
organization, but as an involved individual observer.

Libraries in Rhode Island don't own or access illegal materials, so it's difficult to see how library
staff could ever be held criminally liable for circulating legally inoffensive library materials. And
no Rhode Island library collects materials that can be considered obscene by legal definition.
Materials held by Rhode Island libraries that are about human sexuality are overwhelmingly
works of historical, educational or scholarly value, in library collections for those exact
purposes. This leaves language about "objectionable" materials.

"Objectionable" in legal terms means open to opposition. Libraries are full of entirely legal
materials that are "open to opposition," because no book, article, or even data set, is neutral.
Every single item in a library is "open to opposition."

Guided by the [American Library Association's Code of Ethics](#), Rhode Island library staff work to
collect materials which include multiple points of view and multiple voices for any given topic or
form, in order to present a fair and balanced view of any subject. For any single book which an
individual finds on our shelves, they'll find another which presents an entirely alternate view.
That's how libraries act to promote education, inform citizens, and contribute to the free
exchange of thought.

In July 2023, President Barack Obama wrote, in an open letter to librarians, "In America, the
First Amendment of our Constitution states that freedom begins with our capacity to share and
access ideas—even, and maybe especially, the ones we disagree with."

Please preserve the ability of Rhode Island library staff to provide access to the information and
library materials that might be "open to opposition," by enacting the protections outlined in
H7575.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.
Lanham Bundy
Providence, Rhode Island

