



Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 7575, a bill to protect librarians and library staff in the exercise of their professional duties.

As a member of the civic community founded by Roger Williams and as a follower of the religious tradition founded by Roger Williams, I appreciate his firm commitment to the value of “intellectual freedom.”

Our nation’s founders also understood the importance of “intellectual freedom.” In fact, the framers of the U.S. Constitution recognized how important a free exchange of ideas is to a self-governing pluralistic society. Engaging in civic dialogue and making decisions requires the the availability of information. The right to receive information is fundamental. Impediments to information access are impediments to free thought. Impediments to free thought are impediments to free speech.

In order to develop a vision for the future, a society must learn lessons from its past, and must have he freedom to read about and consider a range of ideas beyond what may be currently held. Exposure to diverse perspectives promotes critical thinking and creative thought. Creative thought is, by definition new, and what is new is sometimes uncomfortable. It was Socrates who told us that the tension that comes when we face what is new and different, helps us get past the darkness of prejudice.

Int America, we are fortunate to have professional library staff who, following established practices, make available books and information that reflect the cultural diversity and pluralist nature of our Society. Their service should be protected from the restrictive influence of any religious, sectarian and majoritarian group.

I encourage passage of this bill.

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