



BLM RI PAC POSITION: SUPPORT

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***The Honorable Evan P. Stanley
House State Government and Elections Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island, 02903***

Honorable Evan P. Stanley and Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee,

I am respectfully giving testimony in support of House Bill 7386, AN ACT RELATING TO LIBRARIES -- STATE AID TO LIBRARIES -- FREEDOM TO READ. The Black Lives Matter RI PAC (BLM RI PAC) appreciates the General Assembly's support in advancing this important piece of legislation, important to our families and communities across the State of Rhode Island.

This bill would encourage and protect the freedom of public libraries to acquire materials without limitations and prohibits materials being removed from public libraries due to partisan or doctrinal disapproval. Public libraries serve as vital community resources that provide access to a diverse range of ideas, perspectives, and knowledge. They play a crucial role in promoting literacy, fostering lifelong learning, and facilitating informed civic engagement. However, the freedom of public libraries to curate their collections and provide unfettered access to information is increasingly under threat from censorship efforts and attempts to restrict intellectual freedom.

House Bill 7386 serves as a necessary safeguard against censorship and undue interference in the operations of public libraries. By affirming the rights of libraries to make independent decisions regarding the acquisition and deaccessioning of materials, this bill ensures that librarians can fulfill their professional responsibilities to serve the needs and interests of their communities without fear of external censorship or political pressure.

Furthermore, House Bill 7386 sends a powerful message that our state values intellectual freedom, diversity of thought, and open access to information. In an era marked by increasing polarization and attempts to silence dissenting voices, it is imperative that we protect the integrity and autonomy of our public libraries as bastions of intellectual freedom and cultural enrichment. By passing 7386, we can ensure that our libraries remain vibrant, inclusive spaces where individuals of all backgrounds can explore, learn, and engage with diverse perspectives without fear of censorship or reprisal.

As a board member & policy advisor with the BLM RI PAC, I am committed to supporting legislation that prioritizes equity and improves the quality of life of all Rhode Islanders. I strongly encourage you to support this bill. Thank you for your consideration. Together, we can move towards a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

LaJuan Allen
Board Member & Policy Advisor, Black Lives Matter RI PAC