

Steven Sepe

From: Cassidy <cassidysandberg@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 11:58 AM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: bill H7386/S2281

bill (H7386/S2281)

My name is Cassidy Sandberg. I am an avid reader, a mother of two, and a former educator of History at the high school level, with a Bachelors in History and Secondary Education and a Masters in Urban Teaching and Education.

Books are everything. They are a place to go for escapism to an imaginary place. They are a resource for information and learning. They are informative entertainment. They are History. They are culture. They cultivate understanding but have also been known to cultivate hate. Books are knowledge. Regardless, they should not be censored. You may say, what about Books like Mein Kampf? What a horrible thing for someone to read. Yes. But it's also History. It's imperative to learn about the past so mistakes are not repeated. This seems to be a HUGE issue today as I watch all types of history repeat itself, while wondering to myself, haven't we done this already? I condemn any efforts to purge or censor books from our nation's schools and libraries. It is a disservice to the children, families, and communities as a whole.

Many of the books being banned nationwide, are books featuring BIPOC characters or characters within the LGBTQIA community, both, where representation is already seriously lacking. It is a dehumanizing form of erasure of cultures, groups of people, types of families, and history itself.

Not just historical or informational texts matter. Stories that reflect the diversity of our world builds empathy and understanding outside of our own little bubble. Our world needs books to help increase empathy and compassion for humanity at this time where it is very much lacking.

What is appropriate reading material should be decided by that person or their parent or guardian. Not the government, libraries or schools. Our first ammendment right is set to insure that access. Access to books and information is foundational to our democracy, and society as a whole. Attleboro recently removed a book on peaceful protest written by a BIPOC author. This book wasn't a call to violence, it wasn't encouraging harm, yet it was removed. We ask our students to be able to look at a topic from both sides, compare and contrast, and debate each side, yet we are removing information at an alarming rate in this country. Information and context is how we draw conclusions and make educated opinions in our lives. Knowing all sides of the story from all perspectives. We can't delete some of those perspectives.

Let's also not forget, we live in an age of information. Anything you remove from a library can be found on the internet. That and much much more. We are in an age where teenagers are watching a war, LIVE on Tiktok. Removing written texts from our libraries will only impact those who are not literate in technology.

Libraries are institutions of the First Amendment. They provide a myriad of access to a knowledge and ideas. When people and organizations seek to advance personal political agendas or beliefs/opinions by censoring books and media, they are in violation of our constitutional rights.

We call upon you to reject the political manipulation of our libraries, and uphold the freedom and equality promised in the Constitution, and to protect the rights of all people to access the books they need and deserve.