

Steven Sepe

From: Erin White <erinwhite@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 12:27 PM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Cc: Rep. Morales, David
Subject: Support for House Bill No. 7386 Freedom to Read Act

Good afternoon,

I write today in enthusiastic support for the Freedom to Read Act (House Bill No. 7386).

My hope is that this bill protects our librarians in Rhode Island and allows them to use their professional judgement to select the best materials for their communities. Diverse library collections are fundamental for building strong communities and allowing each person to see their lived experience represented on the page.

As a graduate of an accredited school of library and information science and a former librarian of 13 years, I have watched with deep concern as my library colleagues across the country have been threatened with violence or told they could lose their jobs over book challenges.

This timely bill represents Rhode Island's commitment to standing as a beacon against bigotry during a tumultuous time in the United States. It is of utmost importance for us to lead by example.

I grew up in Autauga County, Alabama, which is currently one of many towns across America making headlines as a site of virulent, anti-LGBTQ, anti-Black book banning efforts by isolated groups of "concerned citizens". I am also a very visibly queer person, and have known that about myself since I was a small child. Knowing that the very libraries where I spent so much of my childhood are now under attack by anti-LGBT advocates is heartbreaking.

I'm proud of being from Alabama in part because I know that there are many Alabamians who are not like this - who fight the stereotypes and bigotry and engage in important, necessary work to advance civil rights.

I'm proud of living in Rhode Island because fighting bigotry is a statewide value here, as is supporting our libraries in words through amendments like this, and in deed through continued funding.

As a member of my local library's friends of the library board so eloquently stated when we discussed book bans at our last meeting, "We don't do that here."

Please support the freedom to read in Rhode Island.

Thank you,

Erin White