

**Steven Sepe**

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**From:** Jeanette Bradley <jeanette@jeanettebradley.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 28, 2024 8:00 PM  
**To:** House State Government and Elections Committee  
**Cc:** Rep. Stewart, Jennifer A.; Rep. Shanley, Evan P.  
**Subject:** H7386, The Freedom to Read Act - For

**H7386, The Freedom to Read Act  
For  
Jeanette Bradley**

Dear committee,

I am an East Greenwich-based author & illustrator of children's picture books and I am writing in support of the Freedom to Read Act.

Do you remember the first book you read that made you feel seen?

One of my books has a non-binary main character. I've had many experiences with parents who have told me that reading it was the first time their child saw themselves reflected in a book, and how powerful that experience was for them.

It is vitally important for all kids to have access to books that mirror their identities & life experiences. Seeing one's self reflected in literature is an experience of belonging. C.S. Lewis once said, "We read to know that we are not alone." All children deserve to have the validating experience of being reassured they are not alone by seeing themselves reflected in literature.

The vast majority of books being banned or challenged the last few years are about BIPOC or LGBTQ+ characters or history. For children, book bans are about more than just books. When BIPOC or LGBTQ+ children and teens see books about people like them being banned, they experience it as a statement that adults think they also should be banned. They believe if it is not OK for a book about someone like them to exist, then it must mean it is not OK for them to exist.

There is a crisis of youth mental health right now, and book bans that target books about kids from marginalized identities are adding to it. We need to protect and support all Rhode Island youth by assuring that all kids have access to books that reflect their identities and lived experiences. All means all, not just the straight white kids.

Please support the freedom to read in Rhode Island!

Thank you,  
Jeanette Bradley

Sent from my iPhone