



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Melody Drnach, Chair

February 29, 2024

The Honorable Representative Evan P. Shanley
Chairperson, House Committee on State Government and Elections
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill No. 7386 – State Aid to Libraries – Freedom to Read

Dear Chair Shanley and Committee Members:

The members of the Library Board of Rhode Island write to you to express our strong support for House Bill No. 7386 “Relating to Libraries — State Aid to Libraries — Freedom to Read.”

Rhode Islanders are fortunate to have access to public libraries, staffed by professional librarians and informed staff who are supported by enthusiastic volunteers. Places where all people can come together, share ideas, participate in discussions and community programs, and access essential civic and educational resources. We can think of no more important calling than to protect the right to read freely and without fear of external limitations including the banning, removing, censoring or restricting access to specific books or resources.

In a free society, individuals are free to self-determination, where one can decide what they wish to read and also decide what not to read. Through reading, individuals gain greater self-awareness and form a more thorough understanding of our complex world. A world where we increasingly recognize the value of access to and the free flow of information. Information that is not restricted by government, partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

The freedom to read is not freedom if our library shelves are stocked with books and resources that are narrowly focused, demanded and selected by a small group of individuals imposing their personal beliefs on all Rhode Islanders.

We thank the Rhode Island General Assembly for your unwavering commitment to our public libraries and the ongoing efforts to reinforce the principles put forth in our State Constitution. We respectfully ask that you support H 7386 to secure our continued right to access the books and resources that will strengthen our citizenry and Rhode Island.

Respectfully,

Melody Drnach

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