

Steven Sepe

From: Peter Quesnel <ptqprov@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 6:17 PM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Cc: Rep. Stewart, Jennifer A.; Rep. Morales, David; Rep. Sanchez, Enrique George; Rep. Perez, Ramon A.
Subject: H7386

Dear House Committee on State Government Members,

My name is Peter Quesnel, and I am a resident of Providence and a retired school library media specialist. I worked in the Providence School District for most of my career.

I am writing to strongly support House Bill 7386, The Freedom to Read Act, to protect libraries from partisan book bans.

The public library is one of the greatest resources available to people living in a free society. Libraries provide information, reading materials and so much more to all who enter through the library doors or access a library's website and online resources. What is truly extraordinary about public libraries is that they provide resources and services to every sector of the public including children, students, parents, adults, pre-school aged children, business people, retired people, etc. It is truly a community resource that exists for everyone.

And everyone means everyone. People with different values, cultures, opinions, beliefs, interests, abilities all benefit from the resources of the public library. The beauty of libraries is that one may find reading materials to match any interest or information need. People may seek books of interest to them without fear that their reading interests are being judged or censored by a board or a body that seeks to control their access to those books. Readers have that right, the right to read and think according to their own values and beliefs.

The Freedom to Read Act will protect readers from having their rights as readers taken away from them by censors who object to ideas and themes that the censors find distasteful. No one has the right to deny a reader from reading a book of their choice because it offends another person's taste.

Professional librarians build library collections to meet the diverse needs of the populations they serve. Librarians are trained to select materials based on the needs and interests of their communities. Librarians that serve young adults and children select age-appropriate reading materials based on the reading interests of children and young adults. All librarians utilize professional review sources to help make selections.

Library materials may be reconsidered according to library policies set by library governing boards. Library patrons may request reconsideration of specific books using the library's policy. But no book should ever be removed based on political bias or prejudice against a race, sex, sexual orientation or other identity. This is what the Freedom to Read Act seeks to prevent.

Please pass the Freedom to Read Act now so that our libraries may continue to be the truly great resources that they are for all people.

Sincerely,

Peter Quesnel

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