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April 2, 2025

House State Government and Elections Committee
Rhode Island State House
Sent c/o Steven Sepe Committee Clerk
HouseStateGovernmentandElections@rilegislature.gov

RE: Testimony in Support of H5726 – The Freedom to Read Act

Dear Representative Jason Knight, Chair, and Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee:

As a Rhode Island-based author of children’s books, I am writing to express my support for the **Freedom to Read Act (H5726)** which upholds the right to free expression for businesses and individuals in Rhode Island's creative economy, as well as the right for readers in Rhode Island to maintain free access to the marketplace of ideas and information.

My nonfiction picture book biographies for elementary school students have been deemed notable and award-worthy by the **American Library Association, National Council for Teachers of English, Children’s Book Council, Bank Street College of Education, Junior Library Guild, School Library Journal, Smithsonian**, and more. And yet, these same books have been the targets of book bans and soft censorship, here in Rhode Island and in other states.

When the opinions of a small group are allowed to eclipse the expertise of professional librarians with vast experience curating engaging, inclusive, age-appropriate library collections, everyone loses out: the creators whose livelihoods often rely on robust

school and library sales of their books, and we—the readers—who are deprived of our fundamental rights to free speech, free inquiry, and the right to form and express our own opinions, as laid out by the **First Amendment** and the **Rhode Island Constitution**.

To protect the rights of creators and readers in Rhode Island, and to serve students whose curiosity, empathy, and creative problem-solving skills must be cultivated through access to a wide array of diverse books—I urge the committee to support **H5726**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anika Aldamuy Denise

Children's Book Author published by HarperCollins, Abrams, Penguin Random House, and Henry Holt Macmillan

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