

Steven Sepe

From: d mayo-wells <dmayowells@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 9:20 AM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: Statement of Support for H5726 "Freedom to Read Act"

I am writing in support of H576 "Freedom to Read Act"

I have been a resident of Providence since summer 2024. I work as a technologist in Massachusetts; I also publish music journalism and fiction (pseudonymously). I do not write for young adult or juvenile markets.

I believe that it is vitally important that libraries, including school libraries, stock and make available to young people books that their parents would absolutely disapprove of. I would like to briefly share my personal story of how resources were not available to me as a youth, and the decades of pain that caused.

I went through adolescence in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which I believe mirror the circumstances to which many in the GOP would like to return us. When I thought that I might be attracted to more than one gender, I was told that bisexuality was mythical, or a transitional state for people who were really gay. (I was also told by my parents that they'd rather I grow up a drug addict or a murderer than gay.) When I didn't feel comfortable with the words "boy" or "man," I was told the only people who felt like that were tragically deluded men who thought they were women – sick men, crazy men. And even that excluded me—neither "girl" nor "woman" described me either.

There were no resources available to me to counter these narratives—to tell me that what I felt was OK, that there were even others who felt as I did. My only option was to believe that my own sense of self was just wrong. That hurt, deeply, in ways I'm still reckoning with. It wasn't until many years later that I learned about nonbinary people. I don't think that cognitive dissonance was helpful to me, or to my relationships. Most of all, I don't want youth today to go through what I had to go through.

I think the "Freedom to Read Act" is a step in the right direction, for Rhode Island and its citizens, and I urge you to support it, so stories like mine can remain in the past.

Thank you for your consideration,

D.F. Mayo-Wells