



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

April 3, 2025

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House Committee on State Government and Elections

RE: In support of H5726 - An Act Relating to Libraries – The Freedom to Read Act

Dear Chair Shanley,

I write this letter in support of House Bill 5726, legislation that encourages free expression and access to information by prohibiting the censorship of library materials.

As a former history and civics teacher for over 30 years, I know how crucial it is to educate our students – and Rhode Islanders of all ages – on both our history and how to participate in our democracy. Free access to knowledge and the ability to freely express one's individuality are core principles of a democracy and are fundamental in keeping an informed and engaged citizenry.

As the Department that oversees the State Library, reminiscing on the foundation of this institution and its purposeful design within the State House is a clear indicator that our predecessors considered the value of public access to information and historical records for all Rhode Islanders.

At a time when our governing institutions and media outlets are being heavily scrutinized by misinformation and inflammatory discourse, it is critical that libraries remain the center for the public to access different perspectives and beliefs. However, across the country and within our state, books are being challenged and banned from our public libraries. The practice of censoring books solely because of the bias of the few should not impede the freedoms of the many.

Attached is research compiled by Kate Wells, the State Librarian, related to books that have been banned and/or challenged across the state.

That said, I urge the support of this Committee for House Bill 5726, as Rhode Islanders' rights and freedoms are essential to the functioning of our democracy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections
The Honorable David Morales

State House, Room 218, Providence, RI 02903

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Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

To: The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House Committee on State Government & Elections

Cc: The Honorable David Morales & the Honorable Members of the House
Committee on State Government & Elections

From: Kate Wells, State Librarian

Date: April 3, 2025

Subject: Regarding House Bill 5726 (Morales) – An Act Relating to Libraries – The Freedom to Read Act

MEMORANDUM

Chair Shanley,

I write this memorandum regarding House Bill 5726 legislation that encourages free expression and access to information by prohibiting the censorship of library materials.

Below is the information I compiled related to books that have been banned and/or challenged. A “challenge” is an attempt to remove or restrict access to materials based upon the objections of a person or group. A book is “banned” when it is entirely removed from a collection in response to a formal or informal challenge.

In total, there are 44 identified titles that have been challenged since 2015. Several titles have been challenged more than once. One title has been “banned” (i.e. fully removed from a library). One title has been removed from school curriculum but kept in the library.

There is no singular organization or entity that collects this data. This list combines several sources and represents only cases that have been reported. It is believed that book challenges may not be reported to professional organizations and/or the media. Methodologies for collecting data, identification of affected libraries, and reporting on the final response of the affected library differ according to the reporting source.

The American Library Association does not identify the final status of individual titles, but they do track cumulative data. They note that in 2024, there were three attempts to censor books in Rhode Island libraries. Each attempt targeted a single title. Two of those attempts were at school libraries and one was at a public library. Access to two of the titles was retained; access to the other was restricted (i.e. “banned”).

Between 2014-2024, ALA has documented challenges against 38 titles. Twenty-nine of those attempts were in school libraries, eight of those attempts were at public libraries, and one was in a school curriculum. While information is incomplete regarding the final resolution, ALA data notes that access to twenty-nine titles was retained, one title was restricted (i.e. “banned”) and two books were withdrawn from collections based on the ideas and viewpoints expressed in them.

The following list of titles is compiled from various sources including:

- American Library Association, Office of Intellectual Freedom (ALA)
- Rhode Island Library Association (RILA)
- Authors Against Book Bans (AABB)
- Various news & media outlets (News)

Book Challenges in Rhode Island, 2014-2024**Compiled by Kate Wells, State Librarian**

Year of Challenge	Title	Library	Status	Source
2024	A History of Nursery Rhymes by Percy B. Green	Anonymous Public Library	Retained	ALA; AABB; RILA; News
2024	A Costume for Charly by C.K. Malone	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	A Place Inside of Me by Zetta Elliott	Smithfield School District	Retained	ALA; AABB; News
2023/24	All-American Boys by Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely	Anonymous School Library	Unknown	AABB; RILA; News
2022	Beloved by Toni Morrison	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; News
2023	Blankets by Craig Thompson	Anonymous School Library	Retained	ALA; AABB; RILA; News
2023	Bloody Mary: Ghost of a Queen? By Aubre Andrus	Anonymous School Library	Retained	ALA; AABB; RILA; News
2023/24	Bob by Wendy Mass & Rebecca Stead	Anonymous School Library	Retained	AABB; RILA; News
2015	By Any Means Necessary by Malcom X	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	By the Time You Read This, I'll be Dead by Julie Anne Peters	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2023/24	Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice by Phillip Hoose	Anonymous School Library	Retained	AABB; RILA; Newspaper
2022	Drama by Raina Telgemeier	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2022	Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2022	Feed Your Mind: A Story of August Wilson by Jen Bryant	Smithfield School District	Retained	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2018	Fire Song by Adam Garnet Jones	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	Fly on the Wall by Remy Lai	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2021	Fun Home by Alison Bechdel	Jacqueline M. Walsh School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Pawtucket	Banned	AABB; Newspaper
2023	Gender Queer: A Memoir by Maia Kobabe	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA

2022	Gender Queer: A Memoir by Maia Kobabe	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2021	Gender Queer: A Memoir by Maia Kobabe	Westerly School Library	Retained	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2021	Gender Queer: A Memoir by Maia Kobabe	North Kingston School Library	Retained	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2018	Happy Families by Allen Ahlberg	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2021	Iced (Book 6 of the Fever series) by Karen Marie Moning	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	Identity & Gender by Charlie Ogden	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	LGBTQ Rights [author unidentified]	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	More Happy Than Not by Adam Silvera	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2023	My Body is Growing by Dagmar Geisler	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	Nineteen Minutes by Jodi Picoult	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	AABB; Newspaper
2024	Rebound by Kwame Alexander	Gloucester School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; RILA; Newspaper
2019	Shoot Your Shot by Vernon Brundage Jr.	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	Sloppy Firsts by Megan McCafferty	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AABB; Newspaper
2023/24	Stamped from the Beginning: the definitive history of racist ideas in America by Ibram X. Kendi	Anonymous School Library	Retained	AABB; RILA; Newspaper
2023/24	The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie	Anonymous School Library	Retained	ALA; AABB; RILA; Newspaper
2022	The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie	North Smithfield School Library	Unknown	AABB; Newspaper
2018	The Art of Being Normal by Lisa Williamson	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2023/24	The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas	Anonymous School Library	Removed from curriculum but retained in classroom/ school libraries	AABB; RILA; Newspaper
2022	The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2018	The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA

2022	The Truth about Alice by Jannifer Mathieu	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AAB; Newspaper
2023	The Virgin Suicides by Jeffrey Eugenides	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AAB; Newspaper
2018	This Book is Gay by Juno Dawson	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	This One Summer by Mariko Tamaki	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AAB; Newspaper
2022	Tricks by Ellen Hopkins	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	ALA; AAB; Newspaper
2022	Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan	North Smithfield School District	Unknown	AAB; Newspaper
2018	Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2021	Two Grooms on a Cake by Rob Sanders	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	Were I not a Girl: the inspiring and true story of Dr. James Barry by Lisa Robinson	Smithfield School District	Retained	ALA; AAB; Newspaper
2021	Were I not a Girl: the inspiring and true story of Dr. James Barry by Lisa Robinson	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA
2022	Without Shame [author unidentified]	Anonymous	Unknown	ALA

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at marias@sos.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Kate Wells,
State Librarian

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