

Jamie Michalak

www.jamiemichalakbooks.com

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Dear Speaker of the House Rep. Joseph Shekarchi, House Majority Leader Christopher Blazewski, Committee Clerk Steven Sepe, and Rep. Jason Knight:

Our constitutional right to read freely is under attack across the country, and book challenges happen even in Rhode Island. That's why I support the Freedom to Read Act (H 5726), sponsored by Rep. Morales and Sen. McKenney.

As a Rhode Island author and former volunteer at local school libraries, I've witnessed the joy kids experience when they see themselves in a book. When a child interrupts storytime to exclaim, "That character looks like me!" Or when a teen reads a book that feels like a light in the darkness. Books help kids feel seen and represented. Books say, "you matter." That can only happen with a diverse selection in school and public libraries.

Yet these are exactly the titles being challenged. In 2022-2023, PEN America recorded an unprecedented 10,000+ instances of book bans. More than half of these titles feature characters or people of color, themes of race and racism, or LGBTQ+ people or characters.

If books say, "you matter," what message are we sending our children when we take these titles off the shelves?

According to Unite Against Book Bans, educators reported that adding diverse books to their classrooms increased reading test scores and the time students spent reading.

It's really this simple: Parents may choose what their child reads, but they don't have the right to choose what every child reads. Please support the Freedom to Read Act. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Jamie Michalak
Children's Book Author Published by FSG, Candlewick Press & Charlesbridge
Authors Against Book Bans