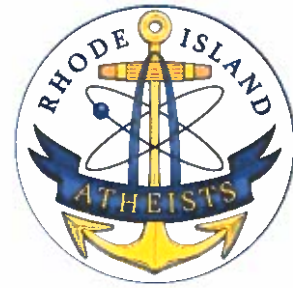


March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025

House State Government and Elections Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903



Dear Chair Shanley and Committee Members,

Book Bans are a separation of church & state issue. They are also a violation of religious freedom- the paramount principle RI was founded on. Rhode Island Atheists opposes any form of book bans as censorship and denial of individual liberties. Efforts to restrict access to literature and punish librarians are being driven by outside Christian Nationalist organizations, unfamiliar with our state's critical legacy. These extremist groups are determined to codify their religious precepts in order to control what children can read, learn about and experience.

Currently, the LGBTQ+ community, women, people of color, and those of different faith backgrounds are the main targets of book bans. Book banning follows a political strategy that attempts to silence diverse religious voices and traditions that are a major part of our state's culture and identity. When ideas and intellectual freedom are suppressed, equality and inclusion are at risk of extinction. By allowing dominant ideas to be forced upon the public, we give the sense that any other views are wrong.

Everyone should be allowed to choose what they believe, to be able to explore different beliefs freely and have access to learning more about others. We strongly urge you to pass the Freedom to Read Act. By protecting books, librarians, educators and writers from Christian Nationalists' persecution, we ensure that Rhode Island remains a free state for all.

Joseph Burgio  
Director  
Rhode Island Atheists  
RIAtheists.com