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Thursday, April 3, 2025

In SUPPORT of the Freedom to Read Act (H5726 or S0238)

Good afternoon. First, I'd like to thank Madame Chair and the Committee members for having today's hearing on this critical bill.

I am FOR the Freedom to Read Act (H5726 or S0238).

This essential piece of legislation will protect the First Amendment rights of Rhode Islanders and our families to read widely and access the many works that should be available to us all, without other people dictating what we can and cannot read.

As an avid reader since childhood, I always found libraries to be places where I could find comfort and wisdom, as well as learn and grow and broaden my horizons. Librarians are gifted professionals who curate their collections and guide the public to find the resources we need.

Librarians, libraries and schools should be shielded from the frivolous lawsuits, often arising from people outside the community, that drain our resources and criminalize the ordinary work of librarians who are just doing their jobs, usually with praiseworthy passion and commitment.

Book bans have no place in Rhode Island. They are unpatriotic and in opposition to a free and functioning democracy. People who may choose to limit what their own children are reading should not have the right to dictate to my children, to my grandchildren, or to other children in the community. And certainly not to me or any other adults.

For all these reasons, I urge the passage of the Freedom to Read Act.