

April 1, 2025

Dear Speaker of the House Shekarchi, House Majority Leader Blazejewski and Representative Craven,

My name is Kathleen Lynch and **I am writing in support of the Freedom to Read Act H5726**. I have worked in public schools as a school librarian for 13 years. I am a RIDE certified school library media specialist and alumna of URI's Graduate School of Library and Information Science (an American Library Association accredited program).

The freedom to read is a fundamental American right, protected by the First Amendment and the Rhode Island constitution. Voters overwhelmingly oppose book banning in the United States. 91% of voters strongly or somewhat agree with the statement "If you don't like a book at a library, don't check it out. Other people shouldn't be able to control what me or my family can read." (EveryLibrary Institute Voter Perceptions of Book Banning (2022)). Our Constitution protects our access to information and ideas, necessary for informed debate and a strong democracy.

H5726 is important because it shields librarians like myself and my teacher colleagues from civil and criminal charges for materials available in our collections. The Freedom to Read Act aligns Rhode Island with the 40+ states, including all other New England states, that have protections for library workers for work performed as part of their job. Also, this Act would require anyone who wishes to challenge library materials to actually attend the school. This protects my library patrons from censorship attempts by outside groups.

The freedom to read is a liberty essential to the preservation of a free society. **Please vote to support Act H5726.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Kathleen Lynch