



April 3, 2025

Chair Evan P. Shanley
House Committee on State Government and Elections
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H-5726 – The Freedom to Read Act

Dear Chair Shanley and Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections:

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women (RI NOW) supports H-5726 to protect the rights of all individuals in the state to read freely and access material within public libraries. It should not be the role of this or any other government to restrict access to content provided by public libraries, nor should we tolerate attempts to censor and remove content based on personal dissatisfactions with the subject matter.

There have been growing and consistent efforts throughout the country to ban books from libraries, particularly targeting books related to women and girls, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ themes. It is not only a waste of resources to process these repeated attempts, but it creates stress and intimidation towards library staff while negatively impacting those who rely on libraries for access to the books that interest them. It should not be acceptable to silence the voices speaking from diverse perspectives. They should instead be uplifted while curious minds enjoy the freedom to seek out and learn from a wide range of experiences.

In keeping with Article XII of the Rhode Island State Constitution, it is the responsibility of the General Assembly to protect access to public libraries to ensure educational equality for all its residents. We understand that access to knowledge and information is crucial to maintaining our rights and liberty. RI NOW wholeheartedly supports this bill and we urge you to pass H-5726 out of committee and bring it to the floor for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Lesley Bunnell
President
RI NOW



Giona Picheco
Legislative Chair
RI NOW

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. Our mission is to take action to bring women into full participation in all aspects of public and private life without experiencing barriers based on gender. Our key issue areas include economic equity, ending violence against women, reproductive health and justice, 2SLGBTQIA+ civil rights, and ending racism.