

March 29, 2025

TO: House Government Committee Clerk Steven Sepe:
HouseStateGovernmentandElections@rilegislature.gov

From:

Madeline M. Smith, Bristol, RI

Writing FOR: Freedom to Read Act H5726

I am submitting my testimony in writing to the State Government and Elections Committee asking your support of the passage of the Freedom to Read bill into law. I believe in freedom of expression and freedom of thought and freedom for an artist or author to express his or her feelings and opinions. I believe in protecting our librarians and teachers from frivolous lawsuits. I believe in the codification of the process of challenging books with an eye towards a possible ban - but I want that process, and that decision, based in MY community and on my community's values, and not some outside influence group. I find it abhorrent that history (and the Washington Post) tells us that 1000 book challenges were filed by 11 people. I find it abhorrent that a website like BookLooks.org can be set up so that people can peruse titles and find highlighted 'offensive' excerpts and use that spoon-fed information to try and ban a book without even reading it, and without even stepping foot in MY library or MY town. I believe that parents are smart enough to know what their children are reading, and are wise enough to know what kids should know about the real world, and when sharing that knowledge is the appropriate time in the child's development. If you don't want your child reading a certain book, then don't let him/her. My full time working Mom had 6 kids and managed to do it. Modern Moms and Dads can do it too.

I agree with Lyndon Baines Johnson: "Books and ideas are the most effective weapons against intolerance and ignorance."

Please support the passage of the Freedom to Read bill and encourage your colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do so.