

Steven Sepe

From: Monica Gonzalez <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 1:18 PM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: Support for HB #5726: RI Freedom to Read Act

Committee State Government Clerk,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill #5726: the Rhode Island Freedom to Read Act. This bill is essential to protecting Rhode Islanders' fundamental rights to free speech, free inquiry, and access to diverse ideas — values enshrined in both the First Amendment and the Rhode Island Constitution.

I am a library worker and have seen first-hand how the attempts at censorship can negatively affect our community. I fully believe that libraries are not the place for censorship. Libraries are a place for access & the Freedom to Read Act solidifies this access to all. If a person or family does not agree to read something that is available in the library it is their choice to not read it or to not allow their children to read it. However, it is not their choice to make these items unavailable for others who may choose to read it. The library is not the place for this. The legal ramifications we have seen across the country for librarians being sued by the public for simply doing their jobs is scary, and in a state such as RI where we value freedoms these protections need to be put in place.

The Rhode Island Freedom to Read Act is a necessary safeguard. Specifically, it would:

- Protects librarians, teachers, and museum staff from unjust legal and professional consequences simply for fulfilling their responsibilities. Rhode Island must align with over 40 other states that already provide these protections.
- Establishes a legal recourse for those harmed by censorship, allowing students, authors, publishers, and booksellers to challenge improper government censorship, with legal fees covered outside of library funding.
- Upholds parental choice by allowing families to determine appropriate reading materials for their own children while ensuring that no single group can dictate what others are allowed to access.

This bill is not about limiting choice—it is about protecting it. The vast majority of Americans—71%—oppose book bans, and 91% agree that no one should control what other families can

read. Libraries and schools should remain places of learning, exploration, and free expression, not battlegrounds for political and ideological censorship.

I urge you to stand with Rhode Island's educators, librarians, and families by supporting the Rhode Island Freedom to Read Act. Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to protecting intellectual freedom in Rhode Island.

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