

My name is Oscar Kunk, currently residing in Pawtucket, and I am here in support of Freedom to Read. For as long as I can recall, literature has been a critically important aspect of my life. Through moving back and forth and the separation of my parents, books have been one of the few constants that I can turn to. Raised by an archivist/librarian, I've always known the importance of reading, and the dangers of restriction and censorship. As an avid reader of comic books, my younger self was always left questioning the erratic nature of silver age comics. The omnipresent Comics Code Authority would be both my greatest enemy and the answer to my questions. After my first few years of reading comics, the little white rectangle that marked their interference would be the bane of my existence. I had no idea why outsiders would feel a need to dilute the artistic visions and expression of talented creators, and I still struggle to theorize on this subject. No one person, other than an author or editor, should have the ability to veto or alter a book or its contents. In a modern world in which the Comics Code Authority has been rendered obsolete, the fact that there are countless misguided minds intent on controlling what information or art is available to the public is more than worrying. There's no knowing if I would ever have been able to discover the writings of one of my favorite authors, Simone de Beauvoir, as a young man scouring the library collections if the book selections were determined by external forces. The policing and restriction of knowledge directly infringes upon the civil liberties of all Americans, halting the free speech of authors and preventing the people from receiving the public education promised to them. Such policing causes deficits in the collective knowledge of the American people, losing decades if not centuries or millennia worth of history from numerous perspectives. The banning of scientific books, such as those focused on reproduction, directly limits understanding of the self and the world around us. Libraries should be safe spaces in which knowledge is available to the people, and bad actors should have no jurisdiction over such havens. I hope that any Rhode Islanders listening will proceed with the understanding that their rights are in danger, and supporting the Freedom to Read Act is one of the best ways to resist this threat to our civil liberties. Thank you for your time.