



ARISE

April 3rd, 2025

In Favor of HB5726

My name is Sarah Xiong and I am a Youth Leader at ARISE. Not only am I an advocate for student voices but first and foremost, I am a high school senior. In all my years of high-school, including this year, I have taken advanced English classes. Therefore, I know firsthand how important literature is. It challenges students to think critically and to analyze deeper than the surface text. This in turn helps create a citizen who is open-minded and can face their life knowing they have the ability to question and find answers. One of the best examples is when I read Fahrenheit 451 as a requirement for AP English Literature and Composition. At first, understanding it was a chore as it had been my first book that discussed book bans or questions of critical thinking. Even at the end of the book, I still did not understand the message and thought for it to be some horribly written fantasy. When the new administration arrived this year, I chose to revisit the book and took mental notes of what was truly happening. After rereading it, I realized I was a result of not enough challenging texts being recommended to students earlier in age. I then took the time to understand each part of the book and put myself in the main character's shoes. Like the main character, I was able to comprehend the sides of a society that wants to shut out judgement that was different from the one that was in power. Students like me benefit from discovering and reading these kinds of books, even if it is at risk of being censored.

By giving librarians, schools, and teachers the ability to promote the freedom to read, only then will you be able to build a society where a generation can build off of each other and uplift one another to provoke a conversation with different mindsets, opinions, and experiences. As a result of my conclusion, it is obvious that I am in support of the HB5726.

We are leaders in our community; you in your respective governing positions and myself, in my community and school. We have different mindsets, opinions, and experiences. Let us lead the current and next generation to a society that will not falter to an administration that is meant to weaken us.

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