

Steven Sepe

From: Tyler Hayes <hayestr@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 10:07 AM
To: Rep. Shekarchi, K Joseph; House State Government and Elections Committee; Rep. Morales, David; Rep. Blazejewski, Christopher R.
Subject: Testimony re: H5726

To Committee Clerk Steven Sepe et al.,

I am sending you my written testimony for the 3/12/25 hearing for the House Freedom to Read Bill (H5726). The text follows my signature. Thank you so much (and an extra thank you to my own representative, Rep. Morales, for sponsoring this bill!)

Best,
Tyler Hayes

I am an abuse survivor. I only survived because I read a book. Until I read books that named emotional abuse for what it was -- *All Systems Red* by Martha Wells, *Paladin's Grace* by T. Kingfisher, *A Dark and Starless Forest* by Sarah Hollowell, the list goes on-- I assumed "abuse" meant you were being beaten or starved and anything besides that was just life being tough. But because I read, I was able to talk to responsible adults and start to heal. Without those books I could have ended up waiting to ask for help for much longer, possibly until they did something that I would have recognized as "abuse" and would have left me with even worse than PTSD. This is why I support the Freedom to Read. Books can help a person to understand the world and themselves. Yes, that can mean a new understanding of your own identity; but it can just as easily mean knowing with confidence that you are who you thought you were, without having to wonder what other options are out there. And sometimes, it can be the difference between danger and safety. People need to be allowed to understand themselves; there isn't anything more "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" than that. That's why I believe Rhode Island needs to do the right thing, and pass H5726.

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