

Written Testimony from Officers of the Friends of the West Fargo Public Library
Contact: friendsofthewfpl@gmail.com
In opposition of HB1205
January 16th, 2023

Dear House Judiciary Committee,

We are the officers of the Friends of the West Fargo Public Library. Our purpose is to promote the functions, resources, services and needs of the West Fargo Public Library. Our organization assists the library overall, as well as library staff and library board members. We also help to raise funding for library programming and outreach to the community of West Fargo.

We are writing this testimony to communicate our opposition of HB1205 which relates to "prohibiting libraries from maintaining sexually explicit material." This bill specifically states that "a public library may not maintain in its inventory or promote books that make as their primary subject the study of explicit sexual material." HB1205 is pro-censorship and has anti LGBTQ sentiments. It doesn't allow parents to choose what their children are reading. These are of grave concern to us as a supportive organization to West Fargo Public Library, who in turn provides resources to the entire community of West Fargo. The library makes knowledge and ideas freely available to the community of West Fargo, so that individuals can learn from different perspectives and have the freedom to read freely. HB1205 would take away the right to read freely from the community of West Fargo and citizens across North Dakota.

This bill will have a negative effect on services that the Friends organization assists the West Fargo Public Library with. One of these is the book sale, which brings in money for library programming such as the library's mobile programming through the Little Red Reading Bus and the Summer Boost Program. We rely on donations from the community and without those donations, the West Fargo Public Library would not be able to provide the programming and outreach that it does to the community. Also of note, this bill is contradictory in reference to removing a material deemed "sexually explicit" within 30 days and then creating policies to curate a collection in order to remove "explicit sexual material. Furthermore, If someone challenged a library holding in court the library and/or library staff could be charged with a class B misdemeanor, fines or both. What does this mean for volunteers and those who donate books?

Overall, HB1205 would infringe on the rights of the West Fargo community and all citizens of North Dakota's freedom to read. It would deny young people from accessing materials that will help them deal with challenges they face. Banning books doesn't actually protect children from dealing with tough issues. HB 1205 endorses government overreach and doesn't allow for individual parents to make choices concerning their child's reading. The Officers of the Friends of the West Fargo Public Library strongly oppose HB1205.

House Judiciary Committee, we urge you to vote 'do not pass' on HB1205. Thank you for your time and consideration,
Officers of the Friends of the West Fargo Public Library
Mari Krajewski, President
Donelle Richmond, Treasurer
Sara Westall, Secretary
Jacob Fischer, Social Media Manager