

January 16, 2023

To: House Judiciary Committee

Chairman Klemin and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

For the record my name is Christine Kujawa, Library Director at Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library and I oppose House Bill 1205.

We have a collection of over 470,000 items, print and digital, and add 20,000 new items to the shelves annually, all in the open and available to any age. Many of the items in our adult non-fiction collection, while neither textbooks nor used in science courses, are used for academic and intellectual pursuits for the average citizen. This includes books about childbirth, sexual intercourse, and other medical related subjects. While we don't necessarily promote these books, they are in our collection should anyone want information on these subjects, free from judgment and stigma.

With an average of 187,000 visitors in the building every year, how would we ever monitor who is looking at these books? The answer is, we can't and shouldn't. Citizens should have the freedom to choose the information they want access to. In the case of minors, parents are responsible for this, not the government. Not in North Dakota, in the United States, a state and country so rightfully proud of a representative democracy.

I consulted with area lawyers regarding this proposed legislation. Should this law pass and I find myself facing criminal charges for providing free and open information to my community, one of them would represent me on contingency followed by suing the State of ND. This is something I never thought I would have to consider during my career as a librarian.

It is not the government's job to prohibit access to information. Censoring intellectual and academic freedom raises significant constitutional questions and issues and is bad public policy. It will be costly to the state in that whoever sues will have their attorney fees paid by the state, and according to my legal sources, that's an average of \$500/hour or more. Why waste the Attorney General's time and money defending an indefensible law? It is an insult to librarians and an insult to our citizens.

Please choose "DO NOT PASS" on HB 1205.

Sincerely,

Christine Kujawa
Library Director, Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library