

House Judiciary Public Hearing
January 17th 9:30am
HB 1205 - Testimony in Opposition

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee, my name is Whitney Oxendahl, and I am here in opposition of House Bill 1205. I oppose this bill because I am a parent of three small children, and this bill aims to limit what books and resources my public library can offer to my family, my children, and my community.

I am also a former member of the Fargo Public Library Board of Directors. The Fargo Public Library is run by an amazing staff of librarians who are professionals with advanced degrees in library science. The librarians overseeing and curating the collection of the hundreds of thousands of books and magazines are professionals, and this bill overrides their credentials.

The bill would also override the Fargo Public Library's policy: "The library will not restrict access to library materials under the assumption that certain materials may be 'harmful' to minors or in an effort to avoid controversy with parents... The library has a responsibility to ensure that young people have access to a wide range of informational and recreational materials and services to meet their diverse needs."

The Fargo Public Library also already has a Statement of Concern policy for reviewing items in the collection that individuals find concerning. A library committee reviews the statement, and the library board votes on the committee's recommendation.

Beyond this, the bill would create a tremendous, nearly impossible burden on North Dakota librarians to audit their entire collection for this type of content. Section 2 of the bill is too broad to even define let alone accomplish.

This bill is not about freedom and liberty, this is about placing restrictions on ideas and information. This bill is about censorship, and I urge you to give HB 1205 a Do Not Pass recommendation.

I'm sure you'll hear some passionate testimony today as we have a community that loves our public libraries. Thank you for the opportunity to share mine.