

My name is John Schroeder and I am a resident of Grand Forks, District 17. I am a father, lawyer, and a library card holder.

This bill recently passed the house and it is now your responsibility to right this wrong. At first reading, this bill had 11 individuals in favor while **65 state residents stood up and provided testimony in opposition. Those in opposition included librarians from rural and urban public libraries in North Dakota, directors of youth advocacy groups, community boards, and public educators, as well as parents.** They presented research and literature, support from medical and mental health associations, and data from national literacy groups. Those opposed were largely parents (not librarians) who can personally choose if they would like their kids to access the books of which they oppose. Nearly every one of those opposed all referred to one book (not a genre of books) and were clearly narrowly scoped in their testimony. However, the proposed bill is NOT narrow in scope and would prohibit youth and young adults from reading and learning pivotal topics in youth development.

HB 1205 is censorship of our public libraries which serve as a critical resource for North Dakota children and adults alike. The bill states that “a public library may not maintain in its inventory or promote books that make as their primary subject the study of sexual explicit material” and continues to describe “sexual explicit material” to include books that address “sexual identity” and “gender identity” – Reading literature to understand our own sexual identity (which includes heterosexuality) is imperative for healthy human development. The “study” or “gender identity” and “sexual identity” are not sexually explicit as the bill implies.

Regardless of the conceptualization and definition of “sexual explicit material” as proposed in the bill, at face value, the bill must be opposed. Not only is it censorship of content and knowledge that is pivotal in supporting marginalized children in our state, **BUT it places an undue burden, and restrictions, on our public libraries which are already underfunded and understaffed, not only in North Dakota, but nationally.**

I urge you to vote NO on HB 1205. No revision of this bill is acceptable.

Please feel free to connect with me if you have any questions about why I strongly oppose this bill. **Please consider reading the testimony of the dozens of public librarians and parents in our state who offered testimony in opposition of this bill at its first hearing.**