

March 13, 2023

To: Senate Judiciary Committee

Chairman Larson and Members of the Senate 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 one million items, accounting for both print and digital material, and add 20,000 new items to the shelves annually, plus additional digital titles, 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.

We also have other books in our collection that anyone could choose to label as "obscene" under the current bill based on their personal opinions. This could include romance novels, portions of encyclopedias, art books, fiction books, including many classics, movies, and even The Bible. While we do not necessarily promote and display all of these items 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? In the case of digital material, we cannot monitor what our patrons are accessing outside our building, nor would we want to remove these titles altogether.

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. Censoring intellectual and academic freedom raises significant constitutional questions and issues and is bad public policy.

Both HB 1205 and SB 2360 violate the First Amendment. These bills interfere with librarians' ability to make decisions within our institutions per our policies and procedures, which have been approved by our Board of Directors, who have been approved by our City Commissions. This bill undermines our ability to build our collections that will interest and edify our diverse communities who are utilizing them.

Please choose "DO NOT PASS" on HB 1205. If SB 2360 comes across your desks in some form again, I ask that you choose "DO NOT PASS" for that bill, as well.

Sincerely,  
Christine Kujawa  
Library Director, Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library