

Hello - My name is Traci Juhala, and I am the Head of Youth Services at Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library. I am writing in opposition to HB1205 and urge a do not pass. Since the crossover and amendments to HB1205, I am submitting further testimony to address remaining concerns. Amendments to this bill could be seen as moving in the right direction, and I'm personally relieved that prison time for those in my profession is no longer being considered. I also still believe that many who have voted for passage of this bill have done so out of concern for children. I, too, am concerned about the welfare of children, which is why I have spent the last 15 years of my career working with and for them. This bill is not the way to keep children safe; this bill is not needed at all, and actually it can potentially harm children by keeping vital information from them. Libraries do not collect pornography for their libraries, and they do not collect sexually explicit materials for children. They do collect materials to represent the variety of perspectives of their communities. And libraries across the state have policies in place to address local concerns about particular books. It is true that the majority of challenged books have not been removed from shelves, but that should be seen as a positive, not a negative. Books that are challenged are looked at by many sets of eyes with many perspectives at play. That is the point of local library policies. It allows individuals in a community to address concerns at the local level, and it allows for addressing individual titles, not general categories of books. This allows librarians and their library boards to take a critical look at particular titles and apply the guidelines they have developed to determine if the titles are properly placed in their libraries. House Bill 1205 is overreaching in that it tries to supplant library boards and their policies by creating a broad stroke of control. So many individuals providing testimony in support have referenced one particular book title, or a sampling of book titles taken out of the context of their collections. That's what library policies are meant to address. Legislation should not be used to remove a particular book. The Century Code that exists is already sufficient to handle these issues. If this bill passes, it will result in confusion and therefore removal of many materials crucially needed by local residents. And this will result in community imbalance. My viewpoint is different from every other person in my community, and that's why I purchase materials for our library based on collection development policy guidelines, not my own personal opinion. If I selected materials on my opinion alone, the library would be imbalanced. It takes all of our opinions and viewpoints to make up our communities, and that's what our libraries need to reflect - the whole community.