

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

The Fargo Board of Education governs the Fargo Public School District with student achievement as our central focus. We are the 3rd largest district in the state with over 11,000 students and the 4th largest employer in the Fargo-Moorhead community with over 2,200 full and part-time employees. We are writing to you in opposition to Senate Bill 2360. This bill would have a detrimental impact on the quality of North Dakota's public education system and our students.

As we're sure you have already received plenty of other testimony discussing the philosophical merits of censorship, we'll skip straight to the practical implications of this bill.

If it becomes law, this bill would place an immediate, significant, and costly burden on FPS staff and district resources. Our schools contain over 300,000 books. If passed, it would likely mean having to go through entire collections with a fine-tooth comb to verify whether each word on each page of each chapter of each book fails to meet the criteria set out in this bill. While we wholeheartedly trust that our library media specialists are knowledgeable professionals, we cannot expect them to know the entire content of each and every book in their collection. We ask a lot of our teachers, but omniscience is impractical. That's why FPS has a robust policy governing the selection and reconsideration of instructional and library material. The FPS policy also provides parents or guardians the opportunity to restrict their student's ability to check out specific materials.

Over the course of many years, as librarians come and go, each librarian curates a school's collection according to the highest of standards. Materials must be age appropriate and educationally valuable. Librarians make these decisions based upon their own education (often Master's level), training, and years of experiences. Moreover, our school librarians are certified as library media specialists by North Dakota's own Department of Public Instruction. Surely this highly qualified group of professionals can be counted on to curate a school's book collection.

Instead of placing an additional burden on already stressed staff and resources, the objective of the bill can be accomplished through library selection and reconsideration policies. We're already struggling to attract and retain enough staff to maintain school operations. Adding thousands of hours of work to pour over pages of books is a waste of our limited human resources, and it's also a waste of taxpayer money.

As a Board, we know and trust our educators to have selected age-appropriate, educationally valuable materials for our schools. We strongly encourage you Do Not Pass Senate Bill 2360.

Greg Clark
Governmental Affairs Committee – Member
On behalf of Fargo Board of Education