

January 23, 2023

To whom it may concern:

I write to urge you to vote in opposition to SB2123. Not only does it infringe on an individual's freedom to read, it criminalizes the work of public servants (library workers). As I'm sure you know, the First Amendment of the United States Constitution states that Congress "shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of press." This bill would promote and force censorship, which libraries are fundamentally opposed to and actively fight against.

If this bill were to pass, libraries across this state would be forced to restrict patrons (of all ages) from the freedom to read what they'd like, including many works considered to be classics. This bill would also force libraries to remove countless books in their collections, which turns into wasting thousands of tax dollars. This forced purge of materials may also be interpreted by patrons as the library staff is monitoring what they check out, which infringes on and violates patron privacy.

What this unnecessary bill is hoping to accomplish is to protect children from exposure to sexually explicit depictions and descriptions. Parents and guardians can and should monitor what their children are checking out and reading. It should be the responsibility of the parent or guardian to shield their child(ren) from this sort of material, NOT that of the state or public library. As you know, there are already laws and acts in place (Children's Internet Protection Act, North Dakota Century Code 12.1-27.1) that help protect minors from this sort of thing. This bill would mean regulating what ANY person has access to, not just children. It infringes on my rights as a library patron, as well as on yours.

At the end of the day, this bill would violate everything public libraries stand for, accessibility being one of the main reasons we do what we do. According to the Freedom to Read statement, issued in May 1953, "...democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship." I urge you to, please, let parents protect their own children, and vote in opposition to SB2123.

Thank you.

-Tori Lee
Mobile Library Coordinator
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