

I am writing to you today regarding Bill 2307 (the public libraries bill). As a parent of young children, a whole life library user turned library employee, & a Christian, I do not feel like Bill 2307 will be beneficial to our state, & specifically, to the smaller libraries in your represented area.

Since I was a little girl, I was constantly in the public library. My mom took me on the city bus to check out piles of books. If a full library trip wasn't possible, we would walk up the street to the Bookmobile that parked in the grocery store parking lot once a week. I grew up surrounded by books & as I grew, I continued to love reading. In college I worked at the college library & now, as a 40 year old mother of 5 children, I work at the Beulah Public Library. I have been employed there for almost 3 years.

My children have also grown up in the library. We have attended story time since they were babies & they have been picking out their own books from library shelves since they were old enough to carry them!

I am also a Christian. I have a strong faith in Christ. My husband is a pastor in Beulah. We have raised our children in the church & we make growing in faith a priority in our household.

All of these things about me have helped shape who I am. As I look at Bill 2307, my Christian, library-loving, mother self can't support it.

The first reason I cannot support this bill has to do with me as a mother. My children are 20, 17, 16, 11, & 7. They don't know a time when the library has not been a part of our lives. They have always felt comfortable browsing through the book stacks, looking for materials that seemed interesting. Most of them have their own library cards & are allowed to check out the things they would like to read. That does not mean that they can read whatever they would like. If they bring home a book that we do not approve of, we have a conversation about why it isn't appropriate & then we return it to the library. Never once in my 20 years of parenting have I had one of my young children bring me an explicit or inappropriate book to check out. There may be things we don't agree with them reading, but none of those materials have been "adult." My husband & I, as the parents, should be the ones helping guide our children in what they can & cannot read. It is not anyone else's job to decide that for my children. Parents need to be engaged with what their children are interested in reading so they can help the children make appropriate decisions for their age & ability.

The second reason I cannot support Bill 2307 is because of my job as a Library Assistant. I have been working at the Beulah Public Library for almost 3 years. Our goal is to be a PUBLIC library, reaching all the people in our service area. We, as library staff, may have opinions about the books in the library, but it is not up to us to use our opinion to determine what people using the library check out. I understand trying to protect children from seeing or experiencing adult situations before they should. Putting that responsibility on library staff is not the answer. All this will do is run fantastic library staff out of libraries due to the fear of jail time.

Along with that, It is also not feasible for many small libraries to have a dedicated space as the only place children can be. Our library does not have a layout that would allow for a separate children's room. Even if it was, parents may want to look for a book in the adult section. They cannot leave their children unsupervised in the children's department. It is not the job of library staff to watch those children while parents browse in other areas. Children would either have to

go with their parents into the adult section or parents would also be restricted to the children's section.

The third reason I cannot support Bill 2307 is due to my Christian faith. There are many things in our public library that I disagree with from a Christian standpoint. Sometimes I inwardly cringe when I see certain books get checked out. There are books in the children's & youth departments that I will not let my kids read. But that's based on my Christian faith. I can't put those regulations on other parents & families. If we are willing to restrict access to books on this level, what's to stop it from going farther? Much of the Bible would be considered "inappropriate" & "adult." Several passages could even be considered erotic by some readers. I allow my children to read it because I believe it is the Word of God & I want them to know what it says. Other people may find it inappropriate & call for it to be removed from libraries. Where is the line? I don't want people to decide for me & my family what is appropriate for us. That is our decision as parents.

Bill 2307 affects PUBLIC libraries in a free country. The responsibility regarding appropriate materials should fall on parents, not on library staff. There shouldn't be restrictions imposed on access to the materials at a public library. It is unfair to punish library directors for allowing all materials to be available to our patrons. I don't know where you stand on this bill, but I ask that you take these things into consideration before you vote.

Thank you for your time,

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