

Senate Judiciary Committee
SB 2307
March 15, 2025

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Erin Conwell and I am a parent, educator, and long-time resident of North Dakota. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to SB 2307, which seeks to impose outrageous restrictions on our libraries and the services that they provide.

When we moved to North Dakota many years ago, one of the very first places my family went was the library, taking our then-toddler along to check out a few picture books. Library visits quickly became staples of our weekends and the librarians provided us with amazing resources to keep our child excited about books. Today, that child is 16 years old and the library remains like a second home where she roams freely, checking out fiction and non-fiction on a huge range of topics, as well as videos and music. The library is an open door to the world, one we could not possibly provide on our own.

SB 2307 would mean that my child would no longer be allowed to hunt through the stacks at the library freely. In spite of her intelligence and maturity, which I believe her father and I are the best judges of, she would be restricted to the children and teen sections, keeping her away from excellent literature that she is more than capable of reading and understanding.

Additionally, SB2307 would allow the attorney general to withhold funding from libraries based on complaints about materials. Ninety-nine point nine percent of parents could be completely fine with their child reading a particular book, but one complainer who hasn't even read the book in question could get it taken off the shelves for everyone. Surely we can agree that this is absurd overreach, but the bill contains nothing to prevent it.

Beyond the gross infringements of freedom of speech and expression that this bill presents, the fiscal note now attached to the bill indicates that it will cost North Dakota over \$2 million dollars. I have yet to hear of a single case of a child in North Dakota being horribly harmed by reading a library book. Why would we spend millions of dollars on a problem that doesn't exist? A better idea: spend the millions of dollars on improving access to literature, not restricting it!

Finally, SB 2307 would turn librarians into criminals just for doing their jobs. The librarians in my community provide amazing services to everyone from babies to elders. They help people file their taxes, learn to knit or garden, and find great literature. They're not criminals; they're professionals, and they should be able to use their professional judgement to do their jobs. They're great at their jobs and I trust them to do those jobs well because I see them do so every week.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject SB 2307 and uphold the principles of free speech and local governance. Our libraries are palaces of learning and joy. Don't make them locked-down prisons of censorship and fear. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Erin Conwell

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