

Testimony in Opposition to SB 2307
House Judiciary Committee March 18th, 2025

Chair Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee: My name is Mary Kay Keller Ralston. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

I taught as a Spanish language instructor in the Bismarck Public School system for over thirty years. I am strongly opposed to SB 2307 because it will damage the academic futures of North Dakota students by forcing schools to limit access to important cultural & educational resources in our school libraries' digital collections, not to mention our public libraries' digital and physical collections.

While this bill focuses on limiting access to books that are "sexually explicit" what the bill's language fails to mention is that by adding a way for citizens to bring legal complaints against librarians and teachers because they disagree with the contents of a book, this also opens the doors to citizens challenging books based on their personal viewpoints.

I will use "Bless me, Ultima" by Rudolfo Anaya as an example. This book has been challenged before, and burned, in certain parts of the USA. Opponents have claimed the book is "anti-Catholic," promotes "occult beliefs," and has "sexual references."

If SB 2307 passes, students across North Dakota could lose access to this book that teaches them about Chicano culture and Indigenous beliefs. The book is not obscene, but because this bill focuses on books that are "sexually explicit" citizens could use this to bring a criminal complaint against librarians and teachers because they disagree with the non-sexual contents of the book.

Teachers and librarians have not chosen this field because they want to brainwash children. And they certainly didn't choose this field for the money. We teach because we hold dear the ability to provide information and help facilitate learning for our students. How can we continue to do this when bills like SB 2307 threaten our professions with criminal charges? If a parent dislikes a certain piece of literature, it is their responsibility to limit the book's access for their child. But they do not have the right to make that decision for everyone else's child.

Please preserve intellectual freedom in North Dakota, and vote NO against SB 2307.

Thank you,
Mary Kay Keller Ralston

P.S. I'm feeling the need to reread "Bless Me, Ultima."