

March 17, 2025

Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

As a practicing School Library Media Specialist in North Dakota and parent of three children that regularly use public, school, and university libraries in North Dakota, I am writing to express strong opposition to Senate Bill 2307. While I appreciate the need to protect minors, which, may I add, is already being done, I am deeply concerned that this bill imposes overly broad, subjective, and potentially harmful restrictions on public libraries, school libraries/districts, and state agencies throughout North Dakota.

Key Concerns:

1. Subjective, Expansive, and Impossible to Navigate:

The bill uses language that is both subjective and potentially expansive. By mandating the removal or relocation of materials based on the vague standards written, the bill risks censoring literature, art, scientific, and historical documents that hold significant literary, artistic, political, or educational value. Public and academic facility libraries have long been bastions of cognitive autonomy and must be able to serve as forums for ideas and education. The interpretations of the restrictions dictated in this bill will vary greatly among “reasonable adults”. Even if you ignore the considerable amount of other subjective language in this bill, the two words “reasonable adults,” make this bill impossible for libraries and librarians to navigate. The threat of prosecution of librarians based on a “reasonable adult’s” opinion of material is simply inconceivable, unobtainable, and absurd.

2. Excessive Administrative and Compliance Burdens:

Senate Bill 2307 mandates that public libraries and school districts develop and implement additional detailed policies and procedures for reviewing and modifying their collections by January 2026 and requires the submission of annual compliance reports to legislative management. HB 1205, passed in legislation in 2023 already requires public libraries to keep age-appropriate materials in children’s area of the libraries, and file yearly reports that demonstrate compliance. School libraries already have carefully crafted curation policies and procedures. These include reconsideration protocols—that are designed to thoughtfully assess and, if necessary, reevaluate materials based on the unique needs and standards of their local stakeholders. Imposing these new requirements risks diverting critical resources away from essential educational and community enrichment programs, placing an unnecessary administrative burden on institutions that are already best positioned to serve their communities.

3. Potential Detrimental Effect on Access to Information:

The provisions of the bill, particularly those that require digital and online library resources to implement safety policies and technology protection measures, may lead to over blocking or the removal of content that is valuable for educational and research purposes. As a school librarian, I know students rely heavily on available databases for research. Digital services and access to research databases will potentially need to be discontinued if digital age verification services cannot be established. Such measures risk adversely affecting students and adults alike.

4. State-Level Overreach and Local Autonomy:

The bill’s imposition of state-level oversight—exemplified by the state’s attorney’s review

procedures and the threat of funding withholding—undermines local autonomy. Decisions about library collections and educational content are best made by local experts who understand their community’s unique needs and how a library and library management functions. A one-size-fits-all approach imposed from the state level is ill-suited to the many and unique communities across North Dakota.

5. **Professional Expertise of Librarians, Educators, and Library Boards:**

Librarians, School Districts, and Library Boards already dedicate significant time and resources to researching and evaluating the materials available in libraries. These professionals undergo specialized training to assess the quality and appropriateness of library collections, ensuring that materials meet the needs of their communities. Their careful and informed curation is crucial to maintaining a balanced collection that respects intellectual independence while serving educational and cultural purposes. Imposing state-mandated policies risks undermining this professional expertise and could lead to decisions that do not reflect the nuanced understanding of local community standards.

While protecting minors is undoubtedly important, the means of achieving this protection must not come at the cost of access to intellectual information, classic literature, academic inquiry, and the operational independence of our educational and cultural institutions and local governance. I respectfully urge you to vote no on SB #2307.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these concerns. I trust that you will act in the best interest of all North Dakotans by voting against SB #2307.

Sincerely,

Lori Knight