

Esteemed Members of the 69th Legislative Session,

My name is Montana Ackman and I live within District 23 in Williston and I am writing to you today to urge you to give SB2307 a 'Do Not Pass' recommendation in committee and to vote in opposition to SB2307 should it appear on the House Floor!

I submitted testimony in opposition to this bill when it was in the Senate Chamber and, while I acknowledge that some changes to the wording have been made since this bill's initial hearing, I would like to reiterate my stance in opposition as this bill is now in the House. SB 2307 passed the Senate by an incredibly narrow margin of 4 votes. As such, I believe that my concerns and the concerns of my fellow North Dakota citizens submitting testimony in opposition have very real credence and I would like you to take that into firm consideration when considering our testimonies in opposition to SB 2307.

My local library provides so much to my community and adds value to my life and to the lives of my family members and friends.

I do firmly believe that SB 2307 would only minimize the good that libraries do while seeking to address a problem that is more based in fear mongering than it is in fact.

My local library here in Williston is busier than it has ever been and offers a wide variety of programs such as:

- Storytimes for the children in our community from birth until preschool where they can enjoy times of reading, play, and friendship. The children's parents can make friends and form community with the other parents in attendance and receive support and connection from others who are going through similar life experiences as themselves.
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics(STEM) programs for school aged children
- Homeschool Hangout times where families who homeschool their children can come together and enjoy STEM activities and games and exchange ideas and build community
- Teen programs designed to provide teens with a space outside their home and school where they can spend time together building friendships and engaging in individual and team building STEM activities and
- Adults have the option to attend craft nights and Scrabble clubs where they can get some time outside the home and spend time together. Many of us who attend these programs are parents seeking some time for themselves and a break from the rigorous work of parenting, seniors who rely on group socialization to combat the loneliness epidemic that affects their daily lives, and adult children and their parents who use these programs to spend intentional time together

The above listed services of the library would be inhibited by SB 2307 as my local library is one large open room with a room that can be used for storytimes and other programs. SB 2307

would require a more firm separation of the library and its materials than is already done and done well by my library and others within North Dakota. The Williston Community Library's children's section is separated from the rest of the library by shelving and the general shape of the building that define the sides of the space and leave a space open for entrance for community members to walk through to enter the children's section. In order to adequately comply with SB 2307 my library would likely need to break up the open spaces within the library with walls of some kind or large locking cabinets to comply. This would not only be costly but my library, like many of the smaller, one room and rural libraries that make up the majority of the libraries in North Dakota, simply does not have the luxury of space needed to comply.

Nowhere in this bill is there any provision for the cost of expanding spaces or building locking cabinets which would be needed for a limited library budget to comply with these demands. There are only threats of reducing funding to libraries; institutions that are already finding ways to make their budgets stretch in order to best serve their communities.

The Williston Community Library also hosts large annual events such as our town's local Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Reading Programs and free parties that are hosted in conjunction with the Summer Reading Program where children can get their faces painted, families can play mini golf and large yard games together while enjoying complimentary snow cones, and our library's Bookmobile attends many other community events such as local town celebrations throughout our county, our airport's local Airshow and farmer's markets.

Many of the people who visit our local library and Bookmobile would not have the time or money to be able to coordinate or be a part of the community events that the library hosts without the library there to facilitate these programs.

Forcing my local library to have a less open layout or have areas of the library that are restricted to minors would greatly lessen our ability to provide these community enriching events within our town!

The Williston Community Library, like other libraries, offers many services in addition to materials available for checkout that individual citizens might not otherwise have access to or be able to afford such as:

- Public computers and printers where people can create resumes, take online work trainings or work on homework.
- Document scanners and a fax machine where they can send paperwork
- Early Literacy Kits and STEAM Kits that are available for checkout that add value to homeschool curriculums and daycares in addition to parents
- Free check out of board games and movies which can be unaffordable for many people myself included
- Free kits designed to aid caregivers of adults with dementia or Alzheimer's
- Free proctoring services for college students
- Low cost rental of a community room for local gatherings and community events and

- Access to free online resources for learning new languages, continuing education courses, eBooks, eMagazines, and streaming of movies and TV shows

I am a caregiver to my elderly grandmother, she lives paycheck to paycheck on social security and the small pension she receives for the many years that my grandfather served in the US Air Force before he passed away. She is able to listen to audiobooks, watch movies and documentaries, check out and read Large Print novels, and attend library craft nights and Scrabble club all of which add immense value to someone who is no longer able to drive herself anywhere due to her age and failing vision. These add so much value to her life as these are things that she could not afford to have in her life otherwise.

For North Dakota libraries to comply with portions of this bill, it is very likely that my grandmother, and other seniors in similar positions, would lose these resources that are so vital in combating boredom and loneliness which can be so detrimental to elderly and disabled members of our communities!

In addition to all the services provided by libraries, library staff provide assistance to community members who need help navigating through the usage of the computers, printers, scanners, and digital resources available to all patrons.

I was raised on the mission field in West Africa and then, my family abruptly had to move back to the US due to a change in the political climate of the country where we served. Having just moved to North Dakota, I was homeschooled through highschool. My parents made use of the Universal Class online resource offered through the North Dakota State Library to supplement my other coursework and to provide me with a way to take classes on typing and the use of Microsoft Office products so that I would be competent in those skills when I entered the workforce. I took those classes on the public computers at the Williston Community Library with general computer literacy assistance from library staff members as I learned how to navigate Universal Class and grow my understanding of computers. The skills that I was able to learn this way have proved to be valuable beyond measure for me in my adult life and in my career.

All of these amazing things would be in danger of being limited or removed entirely should SB 2307 be passed.

Our local library is one large open space. The library would have to construct walls within our library in order to comply with the bill that would make items housed within our adult collection inaccessible to minors. Even just building large cabinets to house materials that people objected to would take up money and space that libraries simply do not have available.

Parents who bring their small children in for storytimes and STEAM activities would be unable to browse the library for books that they would want to check out and read for themselves while their children were with them.

Middleschoolers and highschoolers who need access to the nonfiction section of the library for research projects would no longer be allowed to do so.

Patrons who live in more rural areas of North Dakota and have to drive upwards of an hour to reach their local library who make use of the online picture books for their children would not be able to access those resources with their children's library cards thus limiting their access to library services that they pay for with their taxes.

Additionally, I have lived in Williston for over 10 years and have been a very regular user of my local library and not once in all that time have I ever found a material in the children's area of the library that was not age appropriate.

Certainly the adult section of the library has books by Stephen King (who has over 65 published novels), James Patterson (who has published more than 200 novels since 1976), and Danielle Steele (who has over a 140 published novels) that are not age appropriate for children, but these books are in the adult section of the library not the children's section.

Additionally I believe that this legislation to be unnecessary as libraries throughout North Dakota are already in compliance with HB 1205 which was passed by the 68th Legislative Assembly and the Williston Community Library, like the other libraries in North Dakota, has a Material Selection Policy, a Request for Reconsideration of Materials Policy, and an Internet Access and Computer Use Policy (all of which I have included with my testimony) and these policies are followed by staff members who have gone through many hours of training and continued education in order to be able to perform their job duties and adhere to the policies that have been voted on by the Library Board of Trustees (all of whom live within Williams County) and are enforced by the Library Director.

After reading my testimony, the testimony of other citizens opposing this bill, and the policies that I have included in with my testimony, I hope that you can see that libraries are already doing what this bill would seek to do but are doing so without harming the everyday experience of library visitors and without the unnecessary expense of tax dollars that building walls or large locking cabinets within library's already limited space would cost.

Libraries add so much value to our communities and SB 2307 would not only hamper their ability to do that good but it would also cost tax payers more money to make this happen, makes no provision for the cost to implementing these changes, and threatens to penalize library budgets that are already stretched thin should libraries be unable to comply to the outlined standards in the stated time.

Beyond this, it would be overreach for the state government as libraries already receive governance over these matters by their Library Boards made up of members of the community where each library is located.

In light of all of this, I would strongly urge you to give SB 2307 a 'Do Not Pass' recommendation in committee and to vote in opposition to SB 2307 should it appear on the House Floor!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Montana Ackman