

Dear Legislators,

March 17th 2025

I am writing you today as a private citizen. I work as a Teen Librarian. I have the honor of serving for over a decade at the same public library and I love serving my community's young people. My biggest focus on programming is STEM. Our most popular genre right now is mystery novels. Sex ed is not what I do on a daily basis. However, it's terribly important that our teens have access to correct information about a variety of subjects, including sex, when they need it.

A couple years ago, I was winding around my Teen area, shelving a few books, generally cleaning up when a young man walked in. "Casey" was very troubled after school. I asked him if he was ok. Sometimes, school is rough for a 9th grader. He told me that school was good today but that his little sister was dying. I was instantly very troubled and said I was quite sorry to hear that.

I asked what was wrong as I had seen her just days ago and she had been fine. Casey told me "She's bleeding into the toilet and she can't walk properly." I said "I see, did your parents tell you she was unwell?" "No, they won't talk at all, just look sad and worry." I asked Casey if it was possible his sister was having a period and he looked at me blankly and said "What's that?"

I found a teen puberty book to explain his sister's symptoms to him. The look of relief on his face was astounding to see. This unfortunate teenager had spent a whole weekend and a school day worried to death his 6th grade sister was DYING because his mom and dad were too uncomfortable to explain a simple biological process to him! Appropriate puberty information for both sexes is crucial to teen development and family ties. Anguish over a loved one's demise is no way for a teen to spend a weekend or a school day and by supplying our teens with correct information, we make their lives better.

A few months ago, I had a young lady in to a program who was not feeling well. After a talk with me, I discovered she had been having a period for over two weeks and was too embarrassed to confide in her father and her mother was deployed. She had run out of sanitary napkins and needed to borrow from the supplies I keep in my office. I sent her home with a puberty book to help her talk to her dad. Her father called to thank me the next week. She had been suffering from an ovarian cyst that needed medical attention. I shudder to think what could have happened if she had not talked to her dad. Many bad consequences could have developed: fertility issues in the future, loss of the ovary, infection, internal bleeding and even a risk of death. While some of our lawmakers may see this as a "Judgement of God" I believe we can do better by our children in North Dakota. We can offer modern medical care for example! No 15 year old should be dealing with this. If a book can ease this, give her the book!

Sex ed can feel scary. You want kids and teens to have the right information but not too much to destroy their innocence or give them more than they can handle. As a librarian, I prefer sex ed written by authors that have letters behind their names. Our families deserve to hear from real experts in the field. I try to have sex ed books for a variety of stages, early tweens and later teens, with a variety of viewpoints: spiritual, science based, and social to help teens and parents find the materials that work best for their child and their family views. It's not always an easy conversation for parents and many teens don't make it any easier. They feel uncomfortable and their humor can deflect from having a proper talk. Books that families can talk about together can ease the awkwardness and ensure all the information a teen needs is indeed covered. Sometimes we, as parents, neglect to cover the opposite sex's puberty experience which leads to misunderstandings. Sometimes we forget to explain that our kids can come to us when their bodies seem to be working strangely or are sick. Without good sex ed books, the old chestnuts of "You can't get pregnant on your first time" and "Having sex will make my relationship better." will proliferate throughout teen culture in our state. We must fight these lies with good information.

2307 takes away teen access to sex ed. Anyone can object to anything, leaving the library with no recourse and putting me in jeopardy of jail. In fact, this bill even attaches a million dollars per YEAR to prosecute librarians. If we have the money to worry about this, why can't we feed hungry kids, fix 200 potholes or lower property taxes for our seniors? That is half the money needed to run my larger library for a year. This law is redundant, unamerican, expensive, and makes as much sense as buying a hairdryer for feral Guinea pigs.

As we've seen above, even kids who attend public school might not understand everything they need to know about puberty WHEN they need it. Libraries provide trusted resources when our young people need them. Without well stocked libraries, teens will suffer, or turn to less reliable sources like their friends or dodgy Internet sites. This is not in North Dakota's best interests.

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Teen Librarian

Mom of Three Wonderful Teenagers

Literate North Dakotan

9/11 Survivor Spouse