

Committee Chair and Members of the Committee, my name is Katelyn Dunkley and I am writing today in opposition to House Bill 2307. I oppose this bill because of the unnecessary damage it will cause to the library systems of North Dakota.

I have worked as a librarian for 2 years now. Many people hear what I do and assume that because I'm a librarian, my job is only about books and information. While books and information are a huge part of my job, I've learned that being a librarian is actually about serving other people. Everything we do in libraries is ultimately for the benefit of another human being, whether that's helping someone use our copy machine, sign in to our WiFi, find books and other educational materials, access newspaper archives, or simply giving community members of every demographic a safe place to gather, work, learn, and play.

Bill 2307 is a threat to all of those things.

If this Bill should pass, my small, one-room library will instantly face challenges that will severely limit our ability to serve our community. We do not have the space or resources to put up new walls around our fiction and nonfiction, and to do so would mean cutting programs such as Story Time, Teen Game Nights, and other events that exist to provide the community with free, wholesome activities. I fear that doing so would also lead our patrons, especially teens and children, to feel unwelcome and unwanted in a space cultivated to benefit them.

I am also afraid for the good people I work alongside. My library director is an incredible, kind, and intelligent woman who works tirelessly to bring helpful resources and joyful experiences to our community. I have watched her work late into the night, on weekends, and on holidays, and I admire how she handles every issue that arises in our library with careful consideration and total competency. My heart aches at the thought that she could face undue criminal charges as a result of this Bill.

Libraries are safe. There are already laws in place to protect children from sexually explicit materials, and we have created processes that enable concerned patrons to petition for books to be removed from our collections.

Bill 2307 is unnecessary and presents a very real danger to the welfare of not only libraries, but the people they serve. I implore you to trust in your North Dakota librarians. They are caring, capable individuals who love their communities and already work hard for the benefit and protection of children and families all across the state. I implore you to protect our libraries by voting NO on this Bill.

Thank you for your time, and for your service as our legislators,

Katelyn Dunkley