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March 17, 2025

Chairman Klemin and the Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kerriane Boetcher, and I am the Ward County Public Library Director in Minot, North Dakota. I am asking you to oppose SB 2307 and joining my fellow librarians in asking you to do so.

I have a few areas of concern with this bill. Many of our smaller and mobile libraries are one-room, including all three locations (one being a mobile library) of my library. As such, the entire library is accessible to minors. Both our branch in Kenmare and the Minot branch do not currently have a way to rearrange the library to make it possible for the adult section to be one hundred percent separate from the children's section. The Kenmare branch does not have a location suitable for a cupboard, as we already utilize every available space for patron use. To comply with this bill, these libraries must either build walls and new doorways or not allow minors. Even if we added cupboards for books, obtaining and locating the cabinets within the library would cost money. A mobile library typically has no space for a cabinet to be added to the space. Ward County purchased a brand-new bookmobile in 2023/2024. With limitations on weight and space, the bookmobile was designed for maximum shelving and leaves no extra space to separate books. We would also be removing access to the materials for adults who may not want to ask a librarian's permission to view a book.

Secondly, many of our public and school libraries already have policies for reviewing library collections and for parents to express concerns about available materials. They are part of our policies that are evaluated regularly for consistency and to ensure they are still meeting the needs of our local communities. Public Libraries are required to have these in place as a result of HB 1205, which was passed last session. In short, the processes and procedures are already in place, making this bill unnecessary and redundant.

Thirdly, a person could define digital or online library databases to include our informational databases or our e-book library. Local libraries do not control how books are classified for e-books. That is left up to the distributor. If the distributor refuses to reclassify a book, the North Dakota library could lose access to the e-books. Our older population would also lose access to these materials if libraries were to lose access to the digital library.

If a person were to click on a link that went out of the database, that would be beyond the library's or the database's control. Public Schools and Public Libraries that receive federal

funding are already required under the Children Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to have the filters on their school and/or library devices. However, this bill addresses what minors may access on their home computers. In effect, libraries would need to filter internet access for every North Dakota resident at their place of residence to make it possible.

This also raises questions about the feasibility of making the necessary changes to our databases on a state-wide level. There is not currently any specification on who is in charge of the database review process or who is responsible for verifying the compliance procedure.

As a library professional, whether a minor should have access to reading a particular subject is best left up to their parents and/or guardians. It should not be left to an outside entity without knowledge of the minor and their development. Libraries are uniquely positioned to serve parents who want their children to access certain books and parents who do not want their children to access certain books. We must serve both populations in the best way possible. My beliefs and viewpoints should not dictate what another person may or may not want to read.

Libraries are vital to North Dakota and our small communities, and it is essential that we remain a place where everyone can access the materials they want. Please support libraries in North Dakota and vote in opposition to SB 2307 as proposed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kerriane Boetcher". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Kerriane Boetcher

Library Director

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