

Dear House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 2307. This bill aims to solve a problem that does not actually exist, and due to the vague language used allows for significant government overreach. This bill is a clear attack on libraries, just as similar bills in other states have been. Frankly, I find it embarrassing that this passed our Senate.

Libraries in North Dakota already have systems in place that allow citizens to challenge books they believe should be removed, usually called a “Request for Reconsideration of Materials”. This is just one of several systems in place to prevent problematic materials from being displayed.

Additionally, libraries typically require children to be accompanied by a guardian who is responsible for ensuring the child does not access inappropriate content. My mother had six children to watch and this was never an issue for her. I consider it deeply offensive to parents to imply that they are unable to keep track of their kids in a library well enough to ensure they are not reading “obscene” content.

Furthermore, this bill would make life exceedingly difficult for more rural libraries as they may not have the resources to create a section inaccessible to minors, which could lead to them needing to remove large portions of their collections. It could also lead to North Dakotans losing access to eBook libraries such as Libby – something I am particularly concerned with as I use Libby for much of my reading due to disability. The end result is that a bill that is supposedly intended to prevent children from accessing certain materials, would censor the adult section of libraries.

Criminalizing books is historically linked with authoritarian governments. I expect better from the state I grew up in. I insist that you oppose this bill, and any other like it.

Regards,

Connor O’Keefe