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To: House Judiciary Committee  
State of North Dakota 69th Legislative Assembly

Re: SB 2307  
Position: Opposition

March 17, 2025

To the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee,

As a literary and free expression organization, PEN America opposes legislation that restricts the freedom to read in public schools and libraries. The freedom to read is a core liberty of citizens in the United States, and it has long been supported by the ready, free availability of books and information which public libraries provide.

We are writing in strong opposition to SB 2307 which threatens this core institution of our democracy. Libraries should be safe places for the open exchange of information and ideas. As such, librarians and educators curate collections to ensure access to a range of materials across all age groups. While collections may be tailored based on audience age such as children, teen and adult sections, it is a library's role to facilitate access to materials, not bar access based on a one-size-fits-all approach to the populations it serves. This is how these institutions support the freedom to read that all Americans enjoy.

This bill jeopardizes these freedoms. It will force school districts and public libraries to censor their collections or bar minors entry to their libraries. By threatening to impose new penalties for libraries and librarians for where they shelve certain materials, the bill will undoubtedly lead to the removal of a wide swath of books from the reading public, owing to vagueness in the law's drafting.

Indeed, to avoid violating SB 2307's vague requirement to relocate certain materials to areas that are not "easily accessible to minors," libraries will be forced to take drastic measures. We have seen libraries in other states, like Idaho, refuse a parent access to "restricted sections" because she had with her a baby - who is a minor, and therefore prohibited from that section. Other Idaho libraries have also entirely closed their doors to any minor unaccompanied by a parent, taking away a vital community resource that many minors depend on for access to materials, computers, and safe public spaces for homework. No families or communities benefit from such drastic changes in the library services on which they rely.

We respectfully urge this committee to protect the freedom to read and provide a do not pass recommendation for SB 2307.

Sincerely,  
Sabrina Baêta