

Honorable members of the legislature,

My name is Lesley Allan, and I have been a public school librarian for 20 years, serving as a Media Specialist in multiple school districts. I am writing today as a citizen of North Dakota to express my strong opposition to SB2307.

Every school district I have worked in already has a robust collection policy in place. These policies ensure that materials are curated with care, focusing on curriculum support, student interest, and grade level appropriateness. In my district, the latter is achieved through a process of evaluating multiple reviews from 2-3 sources, looking at interest and reading levels, and - if necessary - running it through the Miller Test. Policies already address reconsideration of materials at a local and a district level while laying out the process should a book be challenged. This bill seems to force the library into doing exactly what supporters of the bill claim we are already doing - not letting parents make the ultimate decision.

Libraries provide an abundance of age-appropriate choices and leave the decision of what to read up to the child and ultimately, hopefully, the parent. Personally, I am overjoyed when I learn that parents are involved in their student's choices, that parents are fostering a love of literature by reading with their students, sharing what their favorite books were when they were young, and encouraging their kids to explore what they enjoy. Should a parent tell me that they don't want their child reading a specific title, I don't judge, I respect their parenting choice as it applies to their child. By removing books that a small group finds offensive and restricting access to those books for all students based solely on the perspectives of a few, this bill denies others the opportunity to form their own opinions and exercise their freedom of choice. In doing so, it tramples on parental rights, violates First Amendment protections, sets a dangerous precedent, and undermines the principles of intellectual freedom that are the foundation of our democracy.

Moreover, this bill's requirements for digital library databases are both redundant and unrealistic in my opinion. As school librarians, we already ensure that the resources we provide to students adhere to stringent privacy and safety standards, such as FERPA and COPPA. These protections and district technology filters are in place to safeguard students while granting them access to high-quality educational content. Teachers and librarians already work tirelessly to support students' learning and development; adding redundant compliance measures distracts from this vital work rather than enhancing it.

I urge you to reject this bill and instead trust the existing policies and respect the professionals who are already working diligently to ensure that our libraries serve the needs of all students while respecting individual family choices.

Thank you for your time and consideration