

~~Chairman~~ Chairman Klemin and members of the committee,

Good morning, my name is Neil Planteen. I am from Cogswell down in Sargent County. I want to thank you all for offering myself and others the time to testify in support of this bill.

I stand in support of Senate Bill 2307. The opponents of this bill have latched onto words such as censorship and book banning in an attempt to cast a shadow over this great step in protecting North Dakota's youth. They say this bill will cost unmeasurable amounts of time and labor to sort through all the books in the library, both new and old. They say that this is just the tip of the iceberg and if these books get removed from the eyes of children then a dark draconian cloud will spread across these beautiful plains and our freedom is next.

Now being this is about books, I appreciate the attempt at additional drama but from being a part of this bill since its inception I can tell you that this is not about classic literature. Senate Bill 2307 is not about The Diary of Anne Frank, it's not about Hemmingway or Shakespeare, it's not about real books, not the type with words anyway. This bill is about protecting children from a certain genre of picture books or graphic novels as they are gracefully labeled today. Once they would have been called comic books or even pulp fiction.

These books are a threat to the innocence of our children. These books often feature brightly colored covers and catchy titles. To a youngster these things draw you in, so you grab the book and start flipping the pages to see if it is worth a full read. But with hardly any words, your eyes start wandering through the pictures of violence, anger, substance abuse and sexuality. The statement that you cannot unsee something that you have seen, is absolutely fact. These images will be permanently etched into your mind. You see if a child sees a

picture of someone playing baseball, what do you think they will think about? If a child sees a picture of a race car? Now what about if a child sees two people in sexually provocative positions? Using drugs or being angry? They will undoubtedly think about these things as well and is that how we want the rest of their day being spent after a seemingly innocent trip through their local school's library?

So let's back up, a fourth grader picks up Macbeth, how long will they flip through the pages before setting it back down and moving on? What about The Diary of Anne Frank or a Hemmingway novel? The truth is that even if they picked it up they wouldn't flip past more than a few pages of finely printed words without any pictures and set it down and move on. These books can only be typically read and comprehended by mature minds. They were written this way by design. Hemingway wasn't thinking about a ten year old reading his books, so what's the angle or intentions of today's graphic novel authors who include illustrations of such lewd and inappropriate things?

If you recall, House Bill 1205 was passed last session. This bill aimed to remove obscene materials from public libraries frequented by children. The bill was passed by both chambers but Governor Burgum vetoed out "Public Schools". The legislature attempted an override but missed it by a narrow majority. Governor Burgum then signed the bill into law without "Public Schools" as part of the language. The question I have is why were public schools not held to the same standard as other public libraries. You may hear opposition this morning saying that this law is already in place and why are we here again? Yes, the law that Burgum signed does restrict public libraries but left public school libraries in limbo with no regulation but by a local school board or school administration. Why aren't public school libraries held to the same standard as other libraries?

Even the truck stop keeps obscene materials on the top shelf behind the other magazines and often wrapped in black plastic to protect young and wandering eyes from corruption! So why aren't public schools at least held to some universal standard? Does a public school bus get to ignore speed limits? Does a public school get to ignore labor laws? Does a public school get to ignore any laws set forth in century code and hide behind a wall of bureaucracy in the name of education? I don't think so, so why is this any different?

Senate Bill 2307 isn't perfect but when is the last time a law was past that was completely perfect? I urge you to support a DO PASS recommendation for SB2307 and take a step in the right direction to protect the innocence of our youth.

Thank you, I stand for questions.

Neil Planteen