

I'm writing to provide testimony in opposition to SB 2307. As the bill is currently written, it applies a vague standard to what is considered "obscene" material to a "reasonable person" from contemporary North Dakota. The definition of obscene or inappropriate may vary wildly from person to person, even amongst "reasonable " people.

Additionally, the restriction on the public libraries states that any access to what is deemed objectionable shall be held in an area inaccessible to minors. Note that minors includes all those up to age 17. Is this bill saying that books that are inappropriate for a kindergarten student are also ALL inappropriate to a high school student? We already have children's sections in public libraries that are checked for appropriate materials for young children. Additionally, there is a young adult section for books deemed too mature for the youngest readers but appropriate to those who are mature enough to handle sensitive content. Why is a state bill trying to supercede the authority of a parent? Is it not a parent's responsibility to decide what is and is not appropriate for their child to read and or listen to? If parents are involved in their child's life, they will be responsible for material their child checks out from a library.

I'm an English teacher in the Bismarck Public School district. Our library has a rigorous process by which they decide which books are appropriate for students. Guidance has already been given at the district level to remove any books considered too mature for 8th grade students based on classification standards from a district approved resource. This process has become more strict in recent years, sometimes to the detriment of students. No one is arguing that explicit sexual material should be made available to middle schoolers. What I am saying is that a too broad definition of obscenity removes classic books and nationally celebrated and recognized books from what may be a student's only way to access them. I can tell you firsthand that students are reading fewer books than they were 20 years ago. Their love and joy in reading is down. Please don't make it more difficult for students to access quality books that may kickstart a love of reading. Respectfully submitted, Erin Quick