

Chair Larson and the Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Chair Larson,

My name is Alex Maitheanas, and I am writing to oppose SB 2307. As a graduate of one of the nation's top ten graduate schools for public policy and public affairs, I know this bill is concerning in multiple ways.

First, the bill is overly, and disturbingly, vague. How is the state defining a "reasonable adult?" How is harm to minors defined under this bill? What are considered to be the "prevailing standards" of offensiveness to adults? What is considered to be offensive to one adult likely isn't going to be the same across the board. Whether or not a book possesses or "lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value to minors" is entirely subjective and will also vary between individuals. In addition to this vague criteria, there is also a strong lack of guidance of how this bill would be implemented and enforced. Additionally, North Dakota's public library system already has a process to challenge books- a new one wouldn't need to be developed or implemented.

In addition to this already confusing bill, lines 29-31 and lines 1-3 on pages 3 and 4 of the bill are not worded in a clear way. It also raises the question of what would happen if a piece of media does contain something that this bill is trying to limit, but the individual doesn't know about it- what happens then? And again, what is this bill trying to limit specifically? The limitations of content are ill-defined. Are books related to sexual education and anatomy going to be banned for minors? Because under this bill, they could be.

I am curious as to why the North Dakota legislature is so focused on banning access to knowledge and resources. Shouldn't students, teachers, and parents be allowed to work together to find the knowledge a student is seeking? They are the experts on finding the information and whether or not it is appropriate for that specific student. To make a broad, sweeping law that assumes all minor students should not have access to a particular piece of media downplays the roles of these experts in the student's life.

Throughout history, banning books, media, and knowledge has never led to positive outcomes. I urge a DO NOT PASS on SB 2307.

Sincerely,

Alex Maitheanas