

I am writing this testimony in strong opposition to any efforts to control or restrict what libraries can have available in terms of books and resources that is being attempted with SB 2307.

Libraries serve as vital institutions within our communities, providing access to information, literature, and ideas that reflect the diverse interests, values, and experiences of individuals. By restricting access to materials, we not only limit the intellectual freedom of patrons but also undermine the very principles of democracy and free expression that our society is built upon.

The role of libraries is to provide a space where individuals can explore various perspectives, engage with new ideas, and make informed decisions based on the information available to them. The freedom to read, learn, and explore topics without interference is a fundamental human right. Censoring books or resources based on specific viewpoints or moral judgments severely restricts individuals' ability to engage with complex topics in a meaningful way.

Many books that are considered controversial or unpopular have played essential roles in shaping societal change. They challenge prevailing norms, broaden perspectives, and give voice to marginalized groups. These works are often essential for students, researchers, and curious minds who seek to understand the world in a fuller, more nuanced way. When access to such materials is censored, we deny future generations the opportunity to think critically and learn about the diversity of human experiences.

The process of deciding which books and resources should or should not be available in a library should not be influenced by narrow political agendas, religious beliefs, or social pressures. Libraries should remain neutral, providing an inclusive space where all voices, ideas, and viewpoints can be heard and respected. The library's role is not to dictate what people can or cannot read, but rather to empower them to make their own choices. Furthermore, we must consider the long-term implications of controlling library content. Where does it stop? If certain materials are removed today, it sets a dangerous precedent for further censorship in the future. It creates a slippery slope where more and more books could be banned, preventing individuals from accessing vital resources that allow for intellectual growth.

In conclusion, I urge policymakers and community leaders to recognize the invaluable role libraries play in fostering intellectual freedom and creativity. Attempts to control the books and resources available to the public go against the core values of open society and democracy. Let us continue to protect our libraries as spaces of learning, discovery, and unencumbered access to information.

Thank you for considering my perspective.

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