

Senators of the 69th Legislative Session,

My name is Mrs. Montana Ackman. My husband and I live within District 23 - 3710 26th St W over by the highschool to be precise. I am writing to you today to urge you to VOTE NO on SB2307.

My local library provides so much value to my life and to the lives of my family members and friends as well as our community as a whole.

Our local library is busier than it has ever been and offers a wide variety of programs such as:

- Storytimes for the children in our community from birth until preschool where they can enjoy times of reading, play, and friendship. The children's parents can make friends and form community with the other parents in attendance and receive support and connection from others who are going through similar life experiences as themselves.
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics(STEM) programs for school aged children
- Homeschool Hangout times where families who homeschool their children can come together and enjoy STEM activities and games and exchange ideas and build community
- Teen programs designed to provide teens with a space outside their home and school where they can spend time together building friendships and engaging in individual and team building STEM activities and
- Adults have the option to attend craft nights and Scrabble clubs where they can get some time outside the home and spend time together. Many of us who attend these programs are parents seeking some time for themselves and a break from the rigorous work of parenting, seniors who rely on group socialization to combat the loneliness epidemic that affects their daily lives, and adult children and their parents who use these programs to spend intentional time together

The Williston Community Library also hosts large annual events such as our town's local Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Reading Programs and free parties that are hosted in conjunction with the Summer Reading Program where children can get their faces painted, families can play mini golf and large yard games together while enjoying complimentary snow cones, and our library's Bookmobile attends many other community events such as local town celebrations throughout our county, our airport's local Airshow and farmer's markets.

Many of the people who visit our local library and Bookmobile would not have the time or money to be able to coordinate or be a part of the community events that the library hosts without the library there to facilitate these programs.

The library offers many services in addition to materials available for checkout that individual citizens might not otherwise have access to or be able to afford such as:

- Public computers and printers where people can create resumes, take online work trainings or work on homework.
- Document scanners and a fax machine where they can send paperwork
- Early Literacy Kits and STEAM Kits that are available for checkout that add value to homeschool curriculums and daycares in addition to parents
- Free check out of board games and movies which can be unaffordable for many people myself included
- Free kits designed to aid caregivers of adults with dementia or Alzheimer's
- Free proctoring services for college students
- Low cost rental of a community room for local gatherings and community events and
- Access to free online resources for learning new languages, continuing education courses, eBooks, eMagazines, and streaming of movies and TV shows

In addition to this, library staff provide assistance to community members who need help navigating through the usage of the computers, printers, scanners, and digital resources available to all patrons.

I was homeschooled through highschool and my parents made use of the Universal Class online resource offered through the North Dakota State Library to supplement my other coursework and to provide me with a way to take classes on typing and the use of Microsoft Office products so that I would be competent in those skills when I entered the workforce. I took those classes on the public computers at the Williston Community Library and the skills that I was able to learn have proved to be valuable beyond measure for me in my adult life and in my career.

I am a caregiver to my elderly grandmother, she lives paycheck to paycheck on social security and the small pension she receives for the many years that my grandfather served in the US Air Force before he passed away. She is able to listen to audiobooks, watch movies and documentaries, check out and read Large Print novels, and attend library craft nights and Scrabble club all of which add immense value to someone who is no longer able to drive herself anywhere due to her age and failing vision. These add so much value to her life as these are things that she could not afford to have in her life otherwise.

All of these amazing things would be in danger of being removed should SB2307 be passed.

Our local library is one large open space. The library would have to construct walls within our library in order to comply with the bill that would make items housed within our adult collection inaccessible to minors.

Parents who bring their small children in for storytimes and STEAM activities would be unable to browse the library for books that they would want to checkout and read for themselves while their children were with them.

Middleschoolers and highschoolers who need access to the nonfiction section of the library for research projects would no longer be allowed to do so.

Patrons who live in more rural areas of North Dakota and have to drive upwards of an hour to reach their local library who make use of the online picture books for their children would not be able to access those resources with their children's library cards thus limiting their access to library services that they pay for with their taxes.

Additionally, I have lived in Williston for over 10 years and have been a very regular user of my local library and not once in all that time have I ever found a material in the children's area of the library that was not age appropriate.

Certainly the adult section of the library has books by Stephen King (who has over 65 published novels), James Patterson (who has published more than 200 novels since 1976), and Danielle Steele (who has over a 140 published novels) that are not age appropriate for children, but these books are in the adult section of the library not the children's section.

Additionally, the Williston Community Library, like the other libraries in North Dakota, has a Material Selection Policy, a Request for Reconsideration of Materials Policy, and an Internet Access and Computer Use Policy and these policies are followed by staff members who have gone through many hours of training and continued education in order to be able to perform their job duties. They adhere to the policies that have been approved by the Library Board of Trustees and are enforced by the Library Director.

I am including these policies with this testimony for you to read.

After reading the policies that can also be found on the Williston Community Library's website under the 'About Us' tab, I hope that you can see that libraries are already doing what this bill would seek to do but are doing so without harming the everyday experience of library visitors and without the unnecessary expense of tax dollars that creating separate but equal sections within the already limited space would cost.

There are other libraries in the state that are even smaller than our library and that would potentially have to become adult only spaces where library goers would have to prove their age before entry thus completely eradicating all the good that libraries do for minors!

Libraries add so much value to our communities and this bill not only would hamper their ability to do the good that they do but it would also cost an imprudent amount of tax dollars to bring this about. Beyond this, it would be overreach for the state government as libraries already receive governance over this by the boards made up of members of the community where each library is located.

In light of all of this, I would strongly urge you to VOTE NO on SB2307!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Montana Ackman