

February 4, 2025

Chairwoman Larson and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony online as I'm not able to be there in person. I am reaching out to you on behalf of myself as a citizen of North Dakota and on behalf of my family, to respectfully ask that you do not pass SB 2307. My family and I live in a small community in North Dakota and are all avid library users.

Though we gratefully use our library's physical collection, we also use a variety of databases and digital resources available to us with our library card and SB 2307 has some unclear and potentially alarming language which will impact our use of these library resources.

My family, like many others, use databases provided by my local public libraries and the ND State Library for both entertainment and educational purposes. Section 6 would make libraries have to update their database authentication systems to identify patrons individually rather than by location as they do now. This would significantly reduce access for K-12 students even with the age verification system in place as ALL material would essentially have to be acceptable for kindergarteners. While I'm sure there are ways for vendors to remove specific titles and articles from their online collections, it would remove it for ALL patrons – not just K-12. This would mean that I wouldn't be able to access the latest Colleen Hoover novel from my library's OverDrive account and my child would not be able to use Academic Search Premier to look for information on Ancient Greece culture.

I completely agree with the need to keep small children from seeing inappropriate content, but libraries and schools already have processes in place to do this, so this section of SB 2307 seems unnecessary. It seems that most of Section 6 of SB 2307 is providing a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

My primary concern with this portion of the bill, and most of this bill, is that my child is 16, but is being lumped into the same group as 7-year olds. He needs to be able to access resources for school projects and his teachers and librarians should not have to worry about fines for breach of contract with vendors as well as financial punishment from the state. This seems especially hard on schools where students from preschool to 12th grade share the same school library.

As a matter of fact, much of SB 2307 seems to mostly punish small towns with K-12 students in one school building and public libraries that are only in one room. Many libraries across the state are just one room and therefore would find it very difficult to keep materials in "an area inaccessible to minors." While some may say that libraries could just put certain items in a cabinet or behind a counter, this is not what patrons like my family want at our public library. We want to be able to browse the shelves to find what interests us and not have to ask someone for permission to get a book.

Please do not pass SB 2307. I know you want to protect children from being sexualized, but I don't think library materials and digital resources do this and I just don't think it's our place to decide what is and isn't right for other people's children. I trust that our library employees are following the necessary laws, policies, and procedures to ensure my children aren't being "sexualized" and I trust that they are reviewing the books they have and which they purchase in order to meet the needs of our community. I ask that you trust them too and do not pass SB 2307.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Anderson
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