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I am a North Dakota citizen writing in opposition to SB 2307. First, it isn't clear what is and isn't covered. Second, it assumes that all minors have the same maturity and reading levels and takes the right to determine what a minor should read away from their parents and legal guardians and puts it in the hands of people who may not have even read the books in question. Third, it would require extra funding for security guards and physical barriers, and may compromise libraries' ability to serve either adults or teens adequately. Finally, it would create a barrier to library access for underprivileged and single-parent families.

It is extremely difficult to pin down what materials are and are not covered by this bill. Part of the problem is the addition of "minors" to the definitions. Materials that have "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors" are excepted. But what does that include? Does it include materials of value to a 17-year-old advanced reader? If we consider the mature and advanced 17-year-old reader as the metric, we end up with a very different set of books than if we use an immature 17-year-old with average reading skills. If we don't consider the advanced 17-year-olds, then this bill will prevent libraries from properly serving them. They need medical texts written at an adult level to study for taking their pre-med exams, for example. And literature that challenges them. Adding "of minors" to "appeals to the prurient interest" opens up even more space for confusion and debate. I have overheard teenage boys taking a prurient interest in the shapes of certain hills and valleys, for example. This is not simple and clearly definitive.

The problem removing anything that anyone considers explicit is that there can be a huge difference between what one person considers explicit compared to the next person. Books that one or more people have tried to get removed from one or more libraries in the U.S. on the basis of sexual explicitness in the past include *Hunger Games*, *James and the Giant Peach*, numerous dictionaries, most books about puberty, and (possibly as I couldn't confirm the story) *Green Eggs and Ham*. To try to explain why, author Emily Knox theorizes in *Book Banning in 21st Century America* that some readers have very vivid imaginations and visualize explicitly scenes that are not explicitly described in the actual text. Most readers do not, and most minors lack the life experience that would enable them to do so. The book was written in 2015, though, back in the days when most people read books before objecting to them. Now, most people who challenge books in libraries find them on lists distributed online and don't know what the books actually contain. Because the opinion of one person who may or may not have read the book should not be enough to determine what books other people's children can read, libraries have policies in place that call for books to which someone objects to be judged by multiple people, informed by both professional reviews and a close reading of the book itself.

In addition to the problem of funding physical barriers in libraries, there is also the problem of staffing and securing them. Many small libraries just have one or two staff with perhaps a few volunteers. Larger libraries are better staffed but have additional demands on their time. Under this bill, libraries would have to staff both adult and children's libraries and have someone check IDs at the door to the adult library to ensure no mature-looking teenagers get in, basically they would need a security guard. The expenses for both facility changes and employment of security guards would be considerable, and, depending on what other bills pass this year, it may be impossible for cities to fund them.

Likely, a good argument could be made that all adult romance novels, most westerns, a sizable chunk of suspense novels, and a smattering of other fiction plus most medical texts, art books, and other nonfiction written for adults qualify under the bill. Libraries can either try to guess exactly which titles

or they can bar minors from accessing any materials written for adults. For advanced readers, this would be devastating as they usually start reading the numerous books written for adults that don't have adult content sometime during their early to mid teens. (Some, even earlier; my brother read all of the Agatha Christie books (which contain nothing sexual) at the Library by age 11.) For all teens, this would mean that they would lose access to most of the materials they need for research as juniors and seniors. The other alternative is to get rid of most of the adult fiction and non-fiction sections altogether which would be devastating for adult readers and researchers.

Libraries have child supervision guidelines because they neither have adequate staff to provide daycare services nor a legal provision to act in loco parentis. Consequently, in order for both parents and children to use the library, parents would have to take their kids to the children's library, go home, hire a babysitter, and then go back to the library to get books for themselves. The babysitter, the time for multiple trips, and the additional travel expenses would all be a burden on families, especially the underprivileged who often have to use the library for computer access to fill out the many online forms required by modern life (including job applications) and single parents.

All of this is unnecessary. Many parents who are concerned about their children accessing adult materials in the library have used much less drastic methods with great success. These methods allow both adults and children to have access to the materials that are appropriate to their age group without barriers, babysitters, or security guards. They just require a little parenting by each child's parents or other care-givers, rather than the state. Here are some of them:

1. Parents talk to their children about their expectations and the reasons behind their expectations. They explain what is and is not an appropriate reading choice. They also talk to their children about what their children are reading.
2. Parents go to the library with their children and follow the library's child supervision rules. Parents are thus able to monitor which books their children access.
3. Parents and/or children ask librarians for book recommendations. Librarians are trained to ask questions to determine what books are appropriate for a given reader. This includes age-appropriateness in addition to any other particular content the reader (or parent) wants to either find or avoid.
4. Parents and/or children use the library catalog to look at the subject heading for books that they are considering. The subject headings reveal if the books are romance novels or not (and whether or not they have LGBTQTIA+ content, for those who are concerned about that).
5. Parents set an age at which their teenagers are allowed to read books with particular content and follow up with their teens to make sure they are keeping within their limits.
6. Most children and teens who are advanced readers intuitively self-censor their reading by skipping over adult content in books that are otherwise appropriate to their intellectual level, but some parents make a point of encouraging this practice.

We do not need security guards, walls, and gates to protect children from romance novels. Further, a child's parents or legal guardians should be the ones who decide what that child is and is not allowed to read, not the state, not people who post lists of books on the internet, and not anyone else.