

Presented by: Zhaina Moya, MLIS, Minot Resident

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I stand before you today in vehement opposition to Senate Bill 2307. As a professional librarian, an advocate for intellectual freedom, and a public servant dedicated to ensuring the accessibility of information for all community members, I find this bill deeply troubling. SB 2307 threatens the very foundation of public libraries, undermines professional collection development policies, and sets a dangerous precedent for government overreach into intellectual and educational spaces.

SB 2307 is a Censorship Bill Masquerading as Child Protection

While the bill claims to safeguard minors from exposure to "explicit sexual material," it is, in reality, a sweeping and vague piece of legislation that enables government censorship and restricts access to information. The bill's definition of "explicit sexual material" is dangerously subjective, relying on ambiguous and politically motivated standards rather than professional literary and educational criteria. Such vague terminology allows for the removal of valuable books that serve educational, artistic, historical, and cultural purposes.

Under the bill's language, renowned works such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, or even *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare could be deemed inappropriate. The chilling effect of such legislation would discourage libraries from carrying essential, diverse, and thought-provoking literature that fosters critical thinking and empathy among young readers.

Libraries Already Have Policies and Professional Standards in Place

Public libraries across North Dakota already follow rigorous collection development policies designed to ensure that materials are age-appropriate and meet the intellectual and educational needs of our communities. These policies are based on professional guidelines from the American Library Association (ALA), the North Dakota Library Association, and other respected organizations. The bill's requirement for additional policies to review and relocate materials is redundant, burdensome, and an unnecessary government intrusion into the professional operations of libraries.

Furthermore, libraries provide parental guidance tools such as book reviews, recommended reading levels, and the ability for parents to monitor their own children's reading materials. If a parent or guardian does not want their child to access certain materials, they have the right to make those choices for their own family. However, they do not have the right to impose their personal values on the entire community.

Empowering the Attorney General to Police Libraries is Government Overreach

The provision allowing any "interested person" to request an Attorney General investigation into a library's materials is an unprecedented overreach. It effectively deputizes individuals to act as moral

gatekeepers, enabling political and ideological groups to weaponize the law against public libraries and educators.

Libraries are institutions of democracy, designed to provide information and resources for all, regardless of political or religious beliefs. SB 2307 opens the door for bad-faith actors to disrupt library operations, intimidate staff, and drain resources through unfounded and frivolous complaints. The threat of losing funding for non-compliance is particularly egregious, as it holds essential community services hostage to ideological censorship.

SB 2307 Disrespects the Expertise of Library Professionals

Librarians are trained professionals who hold degrees in Library and Information Science. We are equipped with the skills and knowledge to curate diverse collections that reflect the informational and cultural needs of our patrons. This bill assumes that politicians and bureaucrats are better suited than librarians to determine what is appropriate for public access, which is both an insult to our profession and a disservice to our communities.

Libraries are among the few remaining institutions where all people—regardless of background—can access information freely. This bill not only undermines that fundamental principle but also places undue administrative burdens on already underfunded and understaffed public libraries.

Conclusion: Protect Intellectual Freedom—Reject SB 2307

Senate Bill 2307 is an attack on intellectual freedom, professional librarianship, and the rights of individuals to access a broad range of literature and ideas. It is a politically motivated attempt to impose restrictive, one-size-fits-all morality on an entire state, ignoring the diversity of thought and values among North Dakotans.

I urge this committee to reject SB 2307 in its entirety. Public libraries are trusted institutions that serve all people, and they should not be subjected to legislative censorship based on arbitrary and subjective standards. Let us instead support policies that uphold intellectual freedom, empower local decision-making, and respect the expertise of library professionals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.