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February 7, 2025

Chairman Larson and the Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kerrienne Boetcher, and I am the Ward County Public Library Director in Minot, North Dakota. I am asking you to oppose SB 2307 and join my fellow librarians in asking you to do so.

I have a few areas of concern with this bill. Many of our smaller libraries and mobile libraries are one-room, including all three locations (one being a mobile library) of my library. As such, the entire library is accessible to minors. To comply with this bill, these libraries would need to either build walls and new doorways or not allow minors. Even if we added cupboards for books, obtaining the cabinets and locating them within the library would cost money. A mobile library typically has no space for a cabinet to be added to the space. We would also be removing access to the materials for adults who may not want to ask a librarian's permission to view a book.

Secondly, many of our public and school libraries already have policies for reviewing library collections and for parents to express concerns about available materials. They are part of our policies that are evaluated regularly for consistency and to ensure they are still meeting the needs of our local communities. In short, the processes and procedures are already in place, making this bill unnecessary and redundant.

Thirdly, digital or online library databases could be defined to include our informational databases or our e-book library. Local libraries do not control how books are classified for e-books. That is left up to the distributor. If the distributor refuses to reclassify a book, the North Dakota library could lose access to the e-books. Our older population would also lose access to these materials if libraries were to lose access to the digital library.

If a person were to click on a link that went out of the database, that would be beyond the library's or the database's control. Public Schools and Public Libraries that receive federal funding are already required under the Children Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to have the filters on their school and/or library devices. However, this bill addresses what minors may access on their home computers. In effect, libraries would need to filter internet access for every North Dakota resident at their place of residence to make it possible.

As a library professional, whether a minor should have access to reading a particular subject is best left up to their parents and/or guardians. It should not be left to an outside entity without knowledge of the minor and their development. Libraries are uniquely positioned to serve parents who want their children to access certain books and parents who do not want their children to access certain books. We must serve both populations in the best way possible. My beliefs and viewpoints should not dictate what another person may or may not want to read.

Libraries are vital to North Dakota and our small communities, and it is important that we remain a place where everyone can access the materials they want. Please support libraries in North Dakota and vote in opposition to SB 2307 as proposed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kerrienne Boetcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Kerrienne Boetcher

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