

Chairman Diane Larson
Senate Judiciary Committee
Regarding SB 2307
February 9, 2025

Dear Chairman Larson, Vice Chairman Paulson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Corinne Edgerton and I am a library technician and concerned North Dakota library patron. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 2307. I urge you to issue a "Do Not Pass" recommendation for the following reasons.

Firstly, the bill's definition of "explicit sexual materials" is so broad that it could be used to censor a wide range of books and other materials, allowing individuals to impose their own moral standards on the community. Yes, parents have the right to decide what their children read and should actively engage in discussions about literature and its themes. However, this right does not extend to dictating what other people's children can read. A parent's concern about a particular book does not justify restricting access for all young readers. Every family is different, and every child is different, therefore, libraries should strive to provide a diverse collection that caters to a wide range of interests and maturity levels, empowering parents to make informed choices for their own children.

Secondly, it misunderstands the vital role that small, rural libraries play in their communities. While some larger libraries may have separate sections, many rural libraries are community hubs housed in a single room. These smaller libraries simply do not have the facilities or the budget to create the required sections. The result could be that rural residents, who often rely heavily on their local libraries, would have even less access to books and other resources than those in larger towns and cities. This bill would create a two-tiered system, where access to information depends on where you live.

Lastly, this bill would subject librarians to criminal penalties for the books they display. Under the proposed legislation, a librarian who displays a book with any nudity on the cover, even in a non-sexual context, could be charged with a Class B misdemeanor. This could include anything from artistic nudes to medical textbooks to, yes, even shirtless men on romance novel covers. This lack of clarity leaves librarians vulnerable to prosecution based on subjective interpretations, creating a climate of fear and uncertainty in our libraries.

In conclusion, reading is a foundational skill, critical to future learning, and to exercising our democratic freedoms. We should trust individuals to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. While parents have the right to guide their children's reading and education, they should not be making decisions for other parents' children. We must remember that books are tools for understanding complex issues. Limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues. Therefore, removing or relocating books is a slippery slope to government censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression. For these reasons, I urge you to stand against Senate

Bill 2307 and issue a “Do Not Pass” recommendation. Thank you for your time, thoughtful consideration, and service to our state.

Respectfully,
Corinne Edgerton (she, her)