

Elizabeth Walch, Bismarck

February 10, 2025

SB 2307

I am submitting testimony in OPPOSITION to SB2307.

I urge you to vote NO on SB2307 relating to making changes to the North Dakota Century Code. While I understand the concern to care for our children and protect them from materials that they may not be ready to understand, this bill is tantamount to censorship and violates our First Amendment Rights.

I acknowledge that nowhere in this bill is the word “censorship.” That may not be the intended purpose of the legislators who introduced this bill, but it will be the result. When a class B misdemeanor can be brought against a teacher or librarian for providing “sexually explicit material” to a minor—that’s a scare tactic and will result in teachers and librarians self-censoring their collections. The State does not have a place in deciding what people read nor should teachers and librarians be punished.

The decision about what literature, music, movies, or art that a child is ready to consume is for the family to decide, not the government. Librarians, teachers and parents agree that protecting children from harm is important, and that it is a practice that librarians, teachers, and parents already engage in. Our librarians and teachers know our kids and care about them deeply. They use that knowledge and personal connection to put books in their hands that will interest them and move them and help them learn and grow.

This bill infringes on the rights of parents, teachers, and librarians to work with their kids and students on choosing reading material that is appropriate and relevant and of interest. It also removes any opportunity we have, to trust our kids with those decisions, too.

As a pastor and person of faith, I am concerned about the “slippery slope” of censorship. I am concerned that the State will want to continue to infringe on the rights of the people to make their own decisions. I am concerned about the curtailing of freedom in this area will lead to the curtailing of other freedoms as well.

I urge you to vote NO on SB2307.

Elizabeth Walch
Bismarck Pastor