

February 9, 2025

Senator Larson and Committee Members,

I strongly urge a “Do NOT Pass” out of committee and “NO” votes on the floor for SB 2307. SB 2307 violates the First Amendment and is bad for North Dakota.

I am a North Dakota resident and local church pastor. SB 2307 could result in removing the Bible from public access and restricts the access of the homeless, the homebound, the hospitalized, and all North Dakotans.

The First Amendment protects the freedom of speech. This bill broadly and subjectively defines “explicit sexual material” and will remove from *all* sections of our libraries age-appropriate materials for teens, young adults, and adults. Our public libraries already curate children’s areas to include only books appropriate for young children. However, this bill will require *all* areas of public libraries to be curated for young children. This will result in the removal of a wide spectrum of non-fiction and fiction books and movies (publications which are already confined to age-appropriate areas). In addition, section 6 of this bill threatens our state’s access to on-the-go resources like Libby and Hoopla, which provide a way for residents to remotely borrow digital and audio books and watch movies while traveling, homebound, hospitalized, or too busy to physically stop at the library.

Important literary works, commentaries on society, and entertainment will be banned from our public libraries using the subjective definition of what “appeals to the prurient interest of minors” even though what does and does not appeal to the prurient interest of minors is defined differently by every child and adult. As a result, thousands of voices will be silenced throughout the state by this bill. This is a direct violation of our First Amendment rights.

The First Amendment also protects the freedom of religion. SB 2307 will unequally remove religious texts from our public libraries. This bill does not provide protections for texts of religious or moral value. As a Christian pastor, it alarms me that our legislators would restrict the religious freedoms of North Dakotans by banning the Bible (which contains numerous instances of “explicit sexual material”). Other religious texts will also be banned by this bill and the censorship will affect the variety of religions unequally.

Our libraries already have established policies for curating appropriate collections based on each community’s needs and the ages of patrons. The legislature should not infringe on the responsibilities of our library boards or school boards to make the best decisions for their local community or the right of parents to make the best decisions for their own children.

Not only is SB 2307 a direct violation of the First Amendment and an act of government overreach into the decision-making process of local communities, but it will also be expensive to implement. Tax dollars will need to be spent to hire readers for every book, article, and magazine currently in circulation in our libraries and schools. The curation of current and future collections will require additional staff. In addition, tax dollars will need to be spent on litigation as a result of this bill.

As a North Dakotan, I strongly urge a “Do NOT Pass” on SB 2307 and a “No” vote on all forms of SB 2307.

Sincerely,  
Rev. Gretchen Deeg  
Bismarck, ND