

Chairman Larson and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

My name is Annie Craven and I am the Library Director of Kidder County Public Library in Steele, ND, which serves all of Kidder County as the only public library in the county.

I am writing today in strong opposition of SB2307 as this bill is redundant and unnecessary. As a library director of a small, rural library this bill if passed has the potential to have wide ranging consequences for libraries all over the state, but perhaps most egregiously to the rural communities that are the heart and soul of this state.

As a public library we already adhere to current ND Century code regarding collection development and placement in the library. We do NOT house any adult content in our children's collection, and we have a strong collection development policy dictating how we carefully select the books and materials in our library. This bill, intentionally or not, leaves the definition of explicit material open to interpretation, and leaves libraries to interpret the meanings or face potential legal consequences.

Moreover, this bill unfairly punishes the smaller libraries in this state who do not have the budget or space to make costly renovations to separate collections for their minor patrons. And make no mistake, this bill is asking libraries to do exactly that, separate physically adult and children's collections, in the name of protecting our state's minor patrons.

I implore committee members to consider my library as a perfect example of just how devastating this bill would be to small rural libraries if passed.

Kidder County Public Library sits in a county of under 3,000 people, and Steele has a population of around 650 people. In the last 3 years our library has undergone major changes. We have updated ALL our fixtures in the library, as well as brought our collection online utilizing the ODIN network, and we have enacted a wide range of programs for our younger patrons including a weekly Story Time, Lego League programs serving PK-8<sup>th</sup> grade students, and a weekly STEAM Club.

3 years ago, these programs did not exist.

In 2021 we had 91 registered patrons, today we have 314.

Our first year of programing in 2022 we had 37 programs and 558 program participants and in 2024 we 116 programs with 1,438 program participants.

But it gets better.

In addition to doubling the number of patron visits since 2021, we nearly doubled our circulation rates as well. What I am most proud of though, is that in 2021 we had 276 children's circulations and in 2024 it was 2,452. Over TWO THOUSAND circulations for our youngest patrons!

Here is where SB2307 would impede all the hard work and progress our library has made.

Our building is just over 1800 sq. ft. Our adult collection is on the left/east side of the front area, with our children's area on the right/west.

Our back area houses our adult non-fiction books as well as North Dakota and local history collections. It also houses our small, and newly installed kitchenette and storage cabinetry, and is the only area where we can set up tables to provide meeting and workspace. This is where every Wednesday at 10 am you will find 10-20 preschoolers completing a Story Time craft as this is the only space where we can accommodate that kind of activity.

The beauty of our library is that we are accessible to ALL patrons and age groups, and this means that our older and younger patrons exist in the limited space we have, together. Because of this, the increase in families and young patrons that are utilizing our library has grown immensely and continues to rise.

SB2307 would ask us to undergo costly renovations to accommodate separate collections (if it's even possible given the age of our building) or face potential closures to one age group or another. What limited work and meeting space we currently have would not be available. Children would no longer be able to be in the same space as their parents if their parents wanted to utilize the adult collection. The programs we offer would have to undergo major changes or would end given the reduction of space.

I implore committee members to consider all the far reaching and unintended consequences this bill will have if passed. SB2307 only serves to weaken our communities by greatly impacting one of the most valuable community resources we have, especially in rural areas.

Thank you for time and for considering my concerns and issues with SB2307.

Sincerely,

Annie Craven

Director, Kidder County Public Library

Steele, ND