

Dear Senators,

As a university librarian, I cannot imagine the stress that my peers in public and school libraries are currently enduring. As a parent of adult children, I cannot know the extent of pressures currently faced by parents guiding their younger children to adulthood. Tensions become high when the librarian's professionalism and commitment to the children seem under attack, yet the public may not understand why libraries operate as they do. In this session, it seems as though laws may be entirely changed because some books - within a collection of many different books - are making some individuals anxious. Instead of supporting community dialogue and sustained effort, SB2123 short-circuits this difficult work by changing the ND Century Code Chapter 12.1-27.1 Obscenity Control. These proposed changes are extreme and seemingly in conflict with the intent of the chapter as a whole. What is "obscene" is a fraught topic, yet the current version of the law allows for context (the places containing the material), balance (evaluation of the material "taken as a whole") and nature of the material (substantial nude imagery to be sold as a product) in controlling its impact on minors. I cannot understand why legislators would willfully take away these supports in navigating this important issue, especially when the goal of their work is to achieve fairness to a majority of their constituents.

Would the members of the judiciary committee want to be evaluated by a single comment or interaction or by their full legislative career? Assuming the answer is the latter, why would a librarian's role in building up their community's resources hinge upon a book or even a single passage within a book? It makes absolutely no sense nor does it reflect the freedoms of thought and expression that we are all entitled to enjoy.

Please do not let this bill proceed any further than this committee. If advanced, SB2123 would put the staff of libraries, museums and cultural institutions into an untenable position while sowing division among our community members. It would reflect poorly on our state and bring the current debate into the realm of litigation where losses are much harder to bear on all sides.

This testimony is submitted in my personal capacity as a ND resident and does not reflect the views of my employer. Thank you for your consideration,

Kristen Borysewicz, Larimore ND