

January 23, 2023

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 2123 for several reasons. First, as a former school librarian and now Director of the Valley City Barnes County Library in Valley City I am very much aware of the importance of a library that contains a comprehensive collection that supports a wide variety of media, viewpoints, and ideas. For people who love to read, the library provides them with access to subjects they are interested in for FREE. So far this year, our patrons have saved over \$25,000 by choosing to borrow materials from the library and not purchasing them on their own. Many of our patrons would not have the resources to spend on reading material if they couldn't find what they want to read in the library. The absence of the reading material desired by our patrons would also force them to look to outside resources for what they want so will be spending money outside of our community rather than in it. Limiting the library's subject matter will also discriminate against anyone with special needs or that has a reading disability. Many people who struggle to read depend on graphics and sketches to help them understand the text. The pictures, graphics, and sketches help them feel successful as readers and as informed citizens.

Secondly, as a resident of North Dakota, I wonder where this is leading and how far it will go if we allow a bill like this to pass. It seems the main focus of this bill is to limit libraries yet it could turn into much more than that. What would be next? Would a nursing mother be banned from nursing in a restaurant, public park, or other public event because there might be the potential for a minor to get a glimpse of her bare breast? What about the all the trucks that drive around on our public roads and streets that have a big scrotum swinging from the back end of the truck? Certainly, that is disgusting, and a child should not be exposed to that view! Would they be facing a misdemeanor? What about the people that have naked breasted women tattooed on their bodies? Would they face prosecution if they are exposing them in a public area where minors may see them? I feel that if you start taking away our freedom to read and view whatever we choose and possibly even more, our state will decline in residents, tourism, and in respect from the rest of our country.

Third, as a Christian, I am appalled at the treatment my staff have endured over the last six months during our recent book challenge. The name calling, accusations, rude comments, and disgusting messages left on the phone that have taken place by people claiming to be Christians do not display the Christian behavior that Jesus has taught us. I can only assume that these people are reacting out of fear, misinformation, and a reluctance to find the truth. Our library and most others have policies that patrons are encouraged to follow. One of those policies states that underage children are to be supervised by a parent or another adult while they are in the library. Our librarians are not babysitters. If parents do their job, there would be no

opportunity for a child to be in an area that is not meant for them or get ahold of material their parents would find offensive.

Lastly, as a parent, it was my job to supervise my children, monitor what they were watching, reading, and doing. I remember many times when I made those choices. As a parent, I had to extend a certain amount of trust in their choices as well. They did not always make good choices and so they and I had to face the consequences of that. I did not blame a book, other people, or anything else. Ultimately, the responsibility belonged to my husband and I to guide them into adulthood.

One of the hardest things I had to face as a mother was watching two of my teenage children join the military. It became even scarier when they were both in the military during the 9-11 attacks. While they were serving our country, they saw things and experienced things that changed them not necessarily for the better, yet they were willing to serve our country and to fight for the freedom of people both here and abroad. They served for you and would have given their lives if needed to protect your right to freedom. If you take away their right to read and view anything they want as outlined by the Library Bill of Rights' Freedom to Read Statement, what are you telling them? How will you explain to them that it is ok for them to possibly give their life for your freedoms all while you think it is ok to take away theirs?

Please do not make this decision based on the fear and anxiety of a few about something that never be an issue if policies are followed and parents take their responsibility in raising their children seriously. Vote no.

Anita Tulp