

North Dakota Senate Judiciary Committee
600 E Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Opposition to SB 2307

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

As the Director of Standards-Based Instruction for Fargo Public Schools, I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 2307. This legislation poses significant challenges to our educational mission and threatens the integrity of our instructional resources.

Vague Definitions Leading to Overreach

SB 2307 employs ambiguous terms such as "explicit sexual material," which lack clear definitions. This vagueness could lead to inconsistent interpretations and overreach, resulting in the unnecessary removal or restriction of educational materials that are essential for comprehensive learning. The bill's broad language may inadvertently encompass works of significant literary, artistic, and scientific value, thereby depriving students of a well-rounded education.

Undermining Educational Autonomy

The bill mandates policies and processes for reviewing library collections, effectively transferring decision-making authority from educational professionals to external entities. This undermines the autonomy of educators and librarians who are best equipped to determine age-appropriate and pedagogically sound materials for students. Such overreach could stifle academic freedom and limit students' exposure to diverse perspectives.

Potential for Censorship

By imposing restrictions based on subjective criteria, SB 2307 opens the door to censorship. The bill's provisions could lead to the suppression of materials that address important but sensitive topics, thereby hindering open discussion and critical thinking among students. This runs counter to the fundamental principles of education, which aim to prepare students for informed and engaged citizenship.

Negative Impact on Rural and Underserved Communities

The requirements outlined in SB 2307 would disproportionately affect rural and underserved communities. Many schools in these areas lack the resources to implement the mandated changes, such as segregating library collections or conducting exhaustive reviews of materials. This could lead to reduced access to educational resources for students who are already at a disadvantage.

Conclusion

In light of these concerns, I urge you to reconsider the implications of SB 2307. The bill's vague definitions, potential for overreach, threat to educational autonomy, risk of censorship, and disproportionate impact on rural communities make it a detrimental piece of legislation for our educational system. I respectfully request that you oppose SB 2307 to ensure that our schools can continue to provide diverse and comprehensive educational materials to all students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Liann M. Hanson

Director of Standards-Based Instruction
Fargo Public Schools