



Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
January 31, 2024

Board of Education
of Howard County

HB0025: UNFAVORABLE
Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries
and Media Centers

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The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **HB0025 Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers** as a legislative mandate on the selection of school media center materials that doesn't take into account staff expertise and local community voice.

HB0025 defines "sexually explicit materials" as books and auditory and visual materials that contain graphic or obscene depictions of sexual activity that are not: (1) age-appropriate; or (2) used as part of the approved instructional materials for instruction on family life and human sexuality as part of the comprehensive health education program required under the Maryland health education standards. The bill prohibits elementary, middle, or secondary school libraries/media centers from containing materials meeting this definition. It further requires each county board to adopt policies and procedures to implement the prohibition.

Library media center collection resources in schools throughout the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) are populated to provide content that aligns with local, state, and national curriculum standards, maintains educational excellence, nurtures student cognitive, social and emotional well-being, and affirms student identity and experiences. In accordance with local [HCPSS Policy 8040 Selection of Instructional Resources](#), titles for library media centers are selected from organizations, resources, and publications listed in an Approved List of Bibliographical Sources and Reviewing Journals for library media centers. In addition to observing the evaluation and selection policies established by the Board, HCPSS library media specialists are also aware of the suggestions of the American Association of School Librarians, reaffirming its belief in the Library Bill of Rights of the American Library Association. As an important piece of inclusion of the student and parent voice, community feedback is incorporated into the existing HCPSS policy through the use of a local Resource Reevaluation Committee.

As a legislative platform, the Board supports local decision-making in the development of curriculum and policy, including the selection of media center materials that account for a balance of educational practices, available resources, public input, and accountability that is informed and guided by State Board of Education established standards and models, rather than legislative mandates. Legislation that limits local board decision-making authority may weaken the Board's bond with the local community and adversely impact the community's participation in the governance and operation of the school system.

For these reasons, we urge an UNFAVORABLE report of HB0025 from this Committee.