



Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair  
Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice-Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
Room 131, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 29, 2024

Dear Delegate Atterbeary, Delegate Wilkins, and members of the Committee:

I would like to express my opposition to **HB 25: Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers**, which I view as nothing less than an infringement on the Constitutional right to read enjoyed by Marylanders.

This legislation will effectively turn well-meaning school librarians and media specialists into harassed tools of censorship, frantically scanning books for content deemed "age-inappropriate" by... who, exactly? Educators? Parents? Librarians themselves? Homophobic/"anti-woke" ideologues? The bill does not specify, but the list of materials historically targeted by the recent spate of such bills certainly gives a strong clue.

The stories that have arisen in the national media of hamfisted attempts at censorship that have resulted in ban attempts against such things as the Bible or dictionaries have made a laughingstock of more than one legislature nationally, and the ridiculously broad language of HB 25 will certainly invite similar overcompensation and attendant chaos. And in the end, such a bill will inevitably be rejected as unconstitutional by Federal courts at taxpayer expense, as we have seen over and over, effectively making the entire affair an expensive exercise in grandstanding.

Allowing a loud, disaffected and extremist minority to impose its values on the community at large is fundamentally un-American. Such efforts should be met with the scorn they deserve, as never in human history have censors been regarded as "the good guys." Hiding books will not make people and ideas go away.

Thank you once again for your ongoing support of Maryland's libraries, the people they serve, and the rights of rational people statewide.

Sincerely,

Thomas Vose  
Director, Ruth Enlow Library of Garrett County