



**House Bill 25**  
**Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers**  
**January 31, 2024**  
**Oppose**

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

Advance Maryland strongly opposes HB25, which aims to ban all sexually explicit materials in schools. Such a restrictive measure would have negative consequences on the intellectual development of our students and limit important freedoms. At Advance Maryland, we work towards a Maryland with thriving, healthy and inclusive communities where all Marylanders have access to opportunity, including safe and affordable housing; economic prosperity; quality healthcare; reliable transportation; a restorative justice system; and a livable future.

All literature, including books that touch on sexual themes, plays a crucial role in fostering well-rounded and informed students. Literature allows students to see diverse experiences, perspectives, and challenges that individuals may encounter in their lives. Banning books with sexual content would not only limit students' exposure to different narratives but also hinder their ability to empathize with the experiences of others.

Furthermore, education is about preparing students for the complexities of the real world. By engaging with literature that explores the nuances of human relationships, including sexual topics, students can develop a more profound understanding of the complexities surrounding consent, communication, and interpersonal dynamics. Banning these books would deny students the opportunity to engage in critical discussions about these important topics, leaving them ill-equipped to navigate situations which they may face in their personal and social lives.

Moreover, attempting to shield students from all references to sexuality will stop students from accessing books which tackle important issues, like women's rights. For example, under this legislation, *The Handmaid's Tale*, a Margaret Atwood book often read in school classrooms, would be banned. Similarly, this ban inherently targets LGBTQ+ books, since many books discussing LGBTQ+ issues delve into sexual topics. Banning any and all books with sexual content would undermine the educational value of these works and target books discussing LGBTQ+ issues.

Book bans are an extreme and dangerous form of censorship. Advance Maryland strongly urges the committee to issue an unfavorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Alice Wilkerson  
Executive Director

Testimony written by Tanish Gupta, Advance Maryland Intern