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January 31, 2024

Opposition Testimony to HB 25 - Public Schools – Sexually Explicit Materials – Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

The Frederick Center stands in opposition to House Bill HB 25. This bill, which aims to ban sexually explicit materials from public school libraries, poses significant risks to intellectual freedom and educational quality. We would like the Ways and Means Committee to consider the following:

1. **Censorship and Intellectual Freedom:** The bill represents a form of censorship, restricting access to a broad range of educational and literary content. The subjective nature of what is deemed "sexually explicit" could lead to unwarranted exclusion of important materials.
2. **Slippery Slope and Precedent Setting:** Implementing such a ban sets a dangerous precedent. Today it's sexually explicit materials; tomorrow, it could be any topic that falls under subjective scrutiny. This path could lead to a censored and narrow curriculum, limiting our students' ability to learn and think critically.
3. **Educational Impact and Diversity:** Shielding students from mature topics does a disservice to their development. Education should expose students to diverse ideas, narratives, and perspectives, including those involving sexuality and relationships. Our libraries should reflect the diversity of society and ensure all students find representation and learn about the world's complexity.
4. **Legal and Constitutional Concerns:** The bill raises significant First Amendment concerns and could face legal challenges based on the right to access information and previous legal precedents against book banning.
5. **Practical Difficulties in Implementation:** The subjective nature of the bill's criteria could lead to inconsistent and unfair application, posing challenges in enforcement and potentially leading to injustices in our education system.

In conclusion, HB 25's misguided claim to protect students uses broad and subjective criteria that will infringe on intellectual freedoms and diminish the quality of education. We urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on this bill and maintain a diverse, uncensored library system in our schools.

Sincerely,

Martin Scarborough

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Development Director

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Glorie Cassutto
Program Director

The Frederick Center exists to support and advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people and our families so we thrive, accepted and affirmed, in the broader Frederick community.