



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
Senate Bill 738: Freedom to Read Act**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

February 23, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland envisions a future in which Maryland leads the nation in high-quality, equitable education practices and policies. An important component of a world class education are library services that promote the free dissemination of information and the inclusion/representation of the student body they serve. Librarians and media specialists are given both guidelines and training to help curate a collection of books and other forms of media. School librarians around Maryland often prioritize a collection of books that reflect the wide array of backgrounds of the children all around Maryland.¹

Senate Bill 738 simply protects these trained professionals from being dismissed, suspended, or unfairly disciplined for acting in accordance with their educational background, professional experience, and positional duty. Furthermore, the proposed piece of legislation explicitly prohibits the exclusion of materials due to the background, views, or origin of the person that created said material or the partisan/doctrinal disapproval of the content. Finally, the bill assures that libraries that are sustained through public funding must adopt a written policy consistent with this proposed legislation.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a system where public school administrators' and teachers' intents and informed decisions are not consistently questioned and attacked. The passage of this bill would indicate to the public that Maryland trusts and respects those who work within the public school system.

Not only would passing Senate Bill 738 exemplify Maryland's trust in their public school professionals, protecting the responsibility of librarians and the freedom of the information included within school libraries has tangible benefits for both staff and their students. In a national study completed by First Book and published in 2023, research indicated that an overwhelming majority of educators, 87%, agree that banning specific books within school libraries is never justifiable; a majority of educators also believe that the conversation surrounding government oversight of the content in public school libraries negatively impacts teaching and the school's climate.² Furthermore, Maryland students directly benefit from protecting the duties of the school librarian as students from marginalized communities, such

¹ [Maryland Association of School Librarians](#)

² [Educator Insights on the Conversation Around Banned Books](#)

³ Grace Pickering (2023) "Harmful to Minors": How Book Bans Hurt Adolescent Development, *The Serials Librarian*, 84:1-4, 32-45, DOI: [10.1080/0361526X.2023.2245843](https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2023.2245843)

as a our Black and Brown children and LGBTQ+ youth, can see themselves and their stories in their own school library.³

Protecting the duties of this position, those who uphold values of inclusion and representation, and the free flow of information, advances the General Assembly's promise of a World Class Education for all students in Maryland.

For these reasons, we strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 738.

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