



Worcester County Government

One West Market Street | Room 1103 | Snow Hill MD 21863-1195

(410) 632-1194 | (410) 632-3131 (fax) | admin@co.worcester.md.us | www.co.worcester.md.us

February 22, 2024

Senator Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
brian.feldman@senate.state.md.us

Senator Cheryle C. Kagan
Education, Energy, and Env. Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

Dear Education, Energy, and Environment Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members:

The Worcester County Commissioners unanimously oppose SB 738 – Freedom to Read Act. As written, this bill would hold harmless those attempting to circumvent federal laws restricting the transfer of obscene materials to minors. This legislation would also strip boards of education, governing bodies, parents¹ and community members from having reasonable input into the materials that minors may access in certain libraries, specifically public-school libraries.

Unlike the Motion Picture Association of America's film rating system, which restricts the access of minors to films rated PG-13 (parents strongly cautioned) and R/NC-17 (restricted to audiences aged 17 and over), no such rating protects minors from intentionally or inadvertently accessing explicit materials² in school and public libraries. Therefore, it is incumbent upon BOEs, governing bodies, parents, and community members whose tax dollars fund libraries to have reasonable decision-making authority for both hardcopy and virtual content³ therein.

Because not all hardcopy and virtual content is appropriate for all audiences, we urge you to maintain protections in keeping with federal law that safeguard children, respect the rights of parents, and assure the decision-making authority of local governments and BOEs without the threat of financial repercussion. We thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony W. Bertino, Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive.

Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.
President

cc: Senator Mary Beth Carozza
Delegate Wayne Hartman
Delegate Charles Otto
Library Director Jennifer Ranck
Library Board President Jeff Smith

¹ Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act of 1995

² See 18 U.S.C. §§ 2252B, 2252C

³ See 47 U.S.C. § 223(d) –Communications Decency Act of 1996, as amended by the PROTECT Act of 2003