



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
And Members of the Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates, Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **SB 0738** – Freedom to Read Act -- **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Atterbeary and Committee Members,

While we may agree with the premise that a public library should not be restricted in their product offerings, **we are not aware of a school library that is open to adults, to the general public. We, therefore, are at a loss to understand how removing objectionable media from a school library or denying access to those materials to a minor child at the request of the parent would be a violation of that child's freedom to read.**

SB 0738 appears to eliminate a parent's ability to restrict the exposure of their children to library materials they deem too violent or sexually explicit. Libraries contain many different media including films, videos and magazines that may be too explicit for children under 16 years of age.

*Page 22 (23-507) (B) (1) the comptroller shall withhold **all** state funds from a county that the state library board certifies has failed to operate the county library system consistent with the state standards for libraries.*

A library is no place for politics. Yet page 4, lines 21-23 -- *A library should not prohibit or remove material from its catalogue because of partisan, ideological, or religious disapproval* (emphasis added) – does just that. The bill does not define “partisan” or “religious”. It also does not explain who has the authority to identify an action as “partisan” or “religious” and does not define the criteria that will be used.

Some school libraries currently provide a parent the ability to identify materials a parent does not want their children to see. The library database is updated with that information so that those materials cannot be checked out by the child. Such a policy does not infringe upon any other person's ability to access library materials.

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly objects to this punitive approach to controlling parents whose only intent is to exercise their parental right (and responsibility) to direct the upbringing of their child.

The ability of parents to opt their children out of access to certain materials is not a partisan issue. If SB 0738 is not intended to eliminate parental approval of library materials for children under 16 years of age, then it must be amended to facilitate that parental right.

Either amend **SB 0738** accordingly or vote an **UNFAVORABLE** Report.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman