

House Bill 785 - FAVORABLE
Ways and Means Committee

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee;

Please give House Bill 785, the Freedom to Read Act, a Favorable report.

Censorship is not just unAmerican, it's anti-American. We should all have the freedom to read books that interest us. That books we have access to through the library systems shouldn't be determined according to the political, religious, or other beliefs of any individual, or even majority, in a community. That is wrong and goes against the very values of liberty that this country was founded on.

Librarians have specific educations for the purpose of determining which books should be put on the shelves, according to various factors. In fact, the Maryland Library Association supports this bill. The American Library Association has also, for decades, supported the freedom to read and vehemently opposed censorship. The American Association of School Librarians has a large collection of anti-censorship links on its webpage for school librarians who are being forced to deal with book bans. And the Maryland State Education Association supports the Freedom to Read Act.

Why are some people against allowing librarians doing their jobs? That's an easy one. The groups who are the loudest in promoting censorship of library materials right now are those who have been outspoken against LGBTQ+ people and been opposed to the teaching of the history of racism in this country. Yes, some of them call their bigotry "religion," but so does the Asatru Folk Assembly. If your religion calls on you to reject, demonize, or erase people from public life or education, then it's a religion of bigotry. I don't share that religion. My children don't share that religion. My friends and their children don't share that religion. Removing books because they have LGBTQ+ characters or themes, because they teach about LGBTQ+ issues, or because they teach about experiences and realities of racism means forcing others who use those libraries to practice the religions of the censors. I'm a big fan of the 1st amendment, even memorizing it when I was 10 and first became outspoken against censorship. Those who would prevent others from accessing library materials would do away with it.

I hope you will show your patriotism, your appreciation of information, and your desire for an educated society by giving House Bill 785 a Favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Pasadena, MD