

Daniel Hopkins
822 Thompson Creek Road
Stevensville, MD 21666

February 19, 2024

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, Delegate Jones, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support the HB 0785 Freedom to Read Act. This act requires libraries that receive funding from the State to have firm policies guiding materials collection, and clear procedures for re-consideration requests.

The Freedom to Read Act strongly reasserts the constitutional principle that library materials, services, and resources are essential for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all individuals served by the library. The selection of these materials, services, and resources is intended to be inclusive, representing the diversity of the community.

This legislation actively safeguards local control of the selection process, empowering libraries to operate within the defined scope set by their board and the state library.

While the majority of the public stand firmly against censorship, we have seen a national movement to constrain and censor library materials according to the standards of only a section of a community. There have been efforts to penalize or criminalize the crucial work conducted by library staff. Some of these challenges have reached Maryland. This proposed bill defends libraries and library staff from punitive actions for doing their work within the policies of their libraries.

The Freedom to Read Act protects library materials from intentional harm or restriction of access by individuals, acknowledging these items as communal property. Library materials, services, and resources are vital to successful schools and thriving communities. Please support the passage of this important legislation.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dan Hopkins

Daniel T Hopkins