



## TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

### HB 25 - Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

**POSITION: Oppose**

**BY: Linda T. Kohn, President**

**Date: 31 January 2024**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. At the 2020 LWVUS Convention, delegates voted to amend the LWVUS bylaws to include the League's commitment to its [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Policy](#) in Article II as one of the foundational policies of the organization alongside the Political Policy (also referred to as the [Nonpartisan Policy](#)). The LWVMD is committed to collaborating with lawmakers and educational stakeholders to find solutions that protect the integrity of our education system while respecting the values of inclusivity, diversity, and academic freedom. This bill does not meet those values.

**LWVMD opposes HB 25 - Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials – Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers** because it is censorship and is likely to lead to further censorship of other materials in public elementary, middle, and secondary school libraries or media centers. The bill's definition of "sexually explicit materials" is overly broad and could encompass materials that provide valuable educational content, foster critical thinking, and promote inclusivity. The bill may also restrict access to age-appropriate and educationally valuable resources.

The legislation undermines the existing Comprehensive Health Education Program required under the Maryland Health Education Standards. Because "sexually explicit materials" is ill-defined, the bill will create confusion in our education system as educators grapple with what that means and thereby hinder the comprehensive and effective delivery of health education, including family life and human sexuality instruction.

Local school boards and educators are best equipped to make curriculum and instructional decisions based on the unique needs and circumstances of their communities. This legislation imposes a statewide mandate that does not adequately consider the diversity of Maryland's school districts or the needs of its students.

We acknowledge the importance of ensuring appropriate educational materials in our public schools, but the proposed legislation has the potential to stifle academic freedom, restrict access to valuable educational resources, and disrupt the effective delivery of comprehensive health education.

**We strongly urge an unfavorable report on HB25.**