

FAVORABLE
House Bill 785
Freedom to Read Act

House Ways and Means Committee
February 21, 2024

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The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports House Bill 785, which would require public libraries, including school libraries, to adopt standards that deter book banning and ensure that everyone has access to a rich and inclusive collection of literature and resources. It would also establish protections for school-based library media specialists who uphold those standards.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

All children deserve a high-quality education that helps them think critically about the world and prepare for a better future. Yet public schools and libraries across the country are facing a wave of politically motivated attempts to ban and restrict books and educational materials that celebrate diversity and grapple honestly with history. These extremist campaigns typically target books with authors and characters who are people of color or LGBTQ. Educators work hard to provide an honest and inclusive education to all students: erasing people who look like them from school libraries is antithetical to that goal.

From Carroll County to Montgomery County, Maryland has not been immune to book bans and curriculum challenges. Beyond the direct impact of these restrictions, implemented or simply proposed, is a widespread chilling effect on school and library content that should alarm everyone who wants students to have a high-quality and complete learning experience. Most

Marylanders do not support book bans, but all students are suffering the effects of a vocal few who seek to politicize their education.

This bill is modeled after similar measures in other states that have already taken action to protect honesty in education and resist partisan attacks. It is urgently necessary that we affirm Maryland students' right to read and learn, and this legislation is an important step to that end.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 785.