

02/19/2024

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and the Ways and Means Committee,

I live in Carroll County, Maryland (Eldersburg specifically) and I've been horrified about the proposed book bans. Early in the school year I wrote to the school superintendent about my anger and frustration about the bans, but also about my frustration that those 60 books were shelved while they were pending review. The committee who evaluates those books does not have enough time to churn through 60 books, so effectively these books have been banned for the school year as they get slowly reviewed, which is just what Moms for Liberty wants.

I have a child in elementary school and one who will be there in two years. I want them to have access to books where they can be exposed to a diversity of thought and experiences. Of course I don't expect books of a graphic sexual nature to be available to elementary schoolers. But they never have been at elementary school libraries - it's just a cudgel that Moms for Liberty uses to ban lifestyles or types of people that they do not like. I want my kids and their peers to grow up learning that it's ok to be gay or trans, to love someone of a different race or religion or ethnicity, and to treat people with kindness, even if they're different.

My kids have parents who are open and supportive, who could take them to public libraries or bookstores. But what about the kids who don't? Who may have their school library as the only 'safe' place they can have that kind of exposure and learn that there are other people like them and that there is hope and support out there? I worry the most for them.

Literature is incredibly important and I don't want this private group of parents deciding what's best for everyone's children. Let them censor their own kids' books. I don't tell their kids what to read and they don't tell my kids what to read.

And I especially do not want Media Specialists to have to fear for their jobs because of these groups. It's so hard to find good teachers as it is, these women and men should not have to be in fear of threats or job loss because of someone's political agenda.

I think it's fantastic that the Maryland Ways and Means Committee has crafted legislation to stop these bans and protect Media Specialists. I whole-heartedly support this bill and hope it's enacted. Thank you so much for your concern.

Best wishes,

Jennifer Flax