



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: HB25 Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Dr. Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: OPPOSE

SALISBURY PFLAG OPPOSES BANNING CONTENT

Greetings. My name is Nicole Hollywood. I am a professor in the University System of Maryland, a member of the Maryland Commission for LGBTQIA+ Affairs, a board member of PFLAG Salisbury, a resident of the Eastern Shore, and a parent. I am submitting this testimony in OPPOSITION to HB25 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

Parents who don't like specific books or materials can have their kids opt out of an assignment without infringing on the rights of others. The National Coalition against Censorship explained that "Even books or materials that many find 'objectionable' may have educational value, and the decision about what to use in the classroom should be based on professional judgments and standards, not individual preferences." Further, in the 1982 Supreme Court ruling on Board of Education v. Pico, Justice, William Brennan wrote that taking books off of library shelves could violate students' First Amendment rights, adding that "Local school boards may not remove books from school libraries simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books."

Some of the most frequently challenged and controversial texts help learners get a better idea of the world, their place in it, understand different dangers, and the importance of having agency over oneself and their choices. Every child needs accurate, factual, and realistic exposure to people's experiences with sex, sexuality and relationships in order to understand what is healthy and in order to give people the knowledge and language to use to speak up in the unfortunate chance that they are dealing with sexual abuse. Further, not all parents have the willingness or knowledge to have important conversations with their children about their sexual health. In these cases, children often turn to information they find in the classroom and school library, as well as to trusted teachers, counselors, and other educational professionals. Thus, it is important that such educational materials be available to students where they're best able to access it.

Emboldening people with the opportunity to object to curriculum and ban materials, including books, readings, workbooks, worksheets, handouts, and digital media based on beliefs about morality, religion, personal philosophy, or political ideology is dangerous and only promotes tunnel vision. Accordingly, Salisbury PFLAG opposes this bill and recommends an UNFAVORABLE report in committee.