



Oppose: HB0025

1/29/24

Maryland House of Representatives
Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) and fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) MD Chesapeake Chapter, I am writing to express our **Opposition for HB 25 Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers.**

As experts in pediatrics and advocates for the health of children, we support the protection of minors from exposure to sexually-explicit materials, however this bill concerns us with seeking the ulterior motive of instead censoring from LGBTQIA topics as well as limiting freedom to read. Specifically, there is no research showing that reading books that discuss sex acts correlate with increased risk of harm, earlier sexual practice, or risk of being a victim of sexual assault. In fact, the opposite can be true - these items can broaden perspectives, make youth more aware of risks, and become a source of strength to encourage children that they are not alone.

It is our position that this bill is similar to what was recently passed within Carroll County Public Schools, solidifying a ban of nearly 60 books including classics such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Kite Runner*, *Water For Elephants*, and *The Bluest Eye* while at the same time refusing to remove the Bible. Despite a selected book review committee making recommendations that many removed books should be allowed, the superintendent overrode that decision. Allowing those of a certain religion or political viewpoint to determine which books are "sexually explicit" despite a full literature review as well as recommendations from librarians and other educators is a gross attack on the public school system, students, and educators. It is important to note that this book ban follows a ban of pride flags passed in June 2022, the selection of a biased health curriculum review committee which removed many LGBTQIA+ topics from required health education curriculum, and CCPS school board members who state that "children do not need to be exposed to these alternative lifestyles" when referring to same-sex families and speaking at large meetings against "dangerous gender ideologies" when referring to trans students. An October 2023 article found that 12% of the books banned in CCPS are written by non-binary authors and 45% include LGBTQIA+ characters, a statistically impossible find if at random.

Transgender individuals experience disproportionately worse health outcomes than their peers. They are significantly more likely to receive harassment, discrimination, be the victim of physical or sexual assault, or have severe depression and poor mental health. Transgender adolescents and young adults are two times more likely to seriously consider and/or attempt suicide compared to cisgender LGBQ peers, which is inflated by the fact that LGBTQIA+ youth in general are four times more likely to attempt suicide than non-LGBTQIA+ peers. More than half of all transgender youth are estimated to have



seriously consider attempting suicide in the past year, and affirming these students and their families has been shown to decrease suicidal ideations significantly

Continuing to encourage the disproportionate attacks on the public school system's minority groups as well as limiting safe expression of curious teenagers via literature will only cause harm, and this bill is misguided if the goal is to protect children. For these reasons the Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP emphasizes our **opposition for HB 25 Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers.**

The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your attention to these crucial issues. The members of Chesapeake Chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners are committed to improving the health and advocating for Maryland's pediatric patients. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself, JD Murphy at jmurph89@jh.edu or Lindsay J. Ward, the Chesapeake Chapter President, at 410-507-3642 or lindsayjward@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica D. Murphy".

Jessica D. Murphy DNP CPNP-AC CPHON CNE
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PNP-AC Content Faculty Lead & Instructor for the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsay J. Ward".

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