



BILL: House Bill 25 **DATE:** January 31, 2024

SUBJECT: Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers **COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

SPEAKER: Irene Padilla, State Librarian **POSITION:** Oppose

EXPLANATION

The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) opposes House Bill 25 - Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers.

MSLA has serious concerns about this effort to censor library materials and inhibit Marylanders' freedom to read. Sexually explicit materials are not part of the school library collection. This bill is an unnecessary attempt to censor school library materials where no problem exists.

In addition, language in the bill is ambiguous and could be left open to interpretation. Opponents of intellectual freedom could use it as grounds to censor any materials that present a viewpoint on topics - stories featuring LGBTQ characters, for instance - that they don't support.

The definition of sexually explicit materials in the bill appears to be overly broad and subjective. Terms such as "graphic" or "obscene" lack clear standards, potentially leading to arbitrary decisions on what materials are deemed inappropriate. This could result in the exclusion of valuable literary works that contribute to a well-rounded education.

Furthermore, restricting materials based on their depiction of sexual activity without considering their context within approved instructional materials for family life and human sexuality education may inadvertently limit the ability of educators to address these important topics in a comprehensive and inclusive manner.

It is crucial to recognize that libraries play a vital role in fostering critical thinking, promoting diverse perspectives, and encouraging a love for learning. Blanket prohibitions on certain materials could undermine these fundamental principles and hinder students' intellectual growth. MSLA supports a more balanced approach that respects the autonomy of educators and ensures that students have access to a wide range of materials that contribute to their intellectual and emotional development.

MSLA does not support the passage of this bill.