

Maryland General Assembly
Ways and Means Committee

Written Testimony of Bowie High Student Government Executive Board
Brianna Minus, Secretary

In SUPPORT of HB0785
“Freedom to Read Act”

February 21, 2024 1:00 pm

Thank you Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB0785 The Freedom to Read Act.

My name is Brianna Minus and I am an 11th grader at Bowie High School in Prince George's County, Maryland. I am testifying on the Freedom to Read Act because, as a fellow teenager who loves to read, I don't want books being banned or not having access to read the books in which I have interest.

A couple of weeks ago, my English teacher made us read a text called “I Know Why the Caged Bird Cannot Read”. The text was about the author, Francine Prose, criticizing all of the books that talk about more difficult topics dealing with life such as racism, misogyny, sexual assault, and censorship. Prose did not want students to read these types of books such as “The Color Purple”, “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” and “Fahrenheit 451.” The text made me upset because trying to get students not to read certain books because of the content they may feature is censorship.

I wanted to share my story because I think the Freedom to Read Act is extremely important and should be passed. I have seen on the news and read about what is happening in Florida with the banning of books that explore sensitive issues. I do not want Maryland to end up like that. I want to keep reading expressive books like the ones Maya Angelou and Alice Parker have written because they not only inspire me but inspire others.

I would like to thank Delegate Dana Jones, Delegate Adrienne A. Jones, Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Delegate Eric Ebersole, and Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins for sponsoring this bill. I think it is very important to kids, teenagers, adults, and everyone else who loves to read as much as me that the Freedom to Read Act gets passed.