



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
And Members of the Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates, Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **HB 0785** – Freedom to Read Act -- **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Delegate Atterbeary and Committee Members,

HB 0785 appears to eliminate a parent's ability to restrict the exposure of their children to materials they deem too violent or sexually explicit.

Some school libraries currently provide a parent the ability to identify materials a parent does not want their children to see. The library database is updated with that information so that those materials cannot be checked out by the child. It appears that will not be allowed under the "State Standards for Libraries" and will be enforced through the threat of the loss of State funds.

Page 14 – lines 10-13 and page 18 lines 19-22 (emphasis added)

The State Librarian shall authorize the State Comptroller to withhold State funds from a library... that does not adopt a written policy that is consistent with the State Standards for Libraries.

A library is no place for politics. Yet page 2 lines 28-29 -- *A library should not prohibit or remove material from its catalogue because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval* (emphasis added) – does just that. The bill does not define "partisan" or "doctrinal". It also does not explain who has the authority to identify an action as "partisan" or "doctrinal" and does not define the criteria that will be used.

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly objects to this punitive approach to controlling parents whose only intent is to exercise their parental right (and responsibility) to direct the upbringing of their children.

The ability of parents to opt their children out of access to certain materials is not a partisan issue. If HB 0785 is not intended to eliminate parental approval of library materials for children under 16 years of age, then it must be amended to facilitate that parental right.

Either amend **HB 0785** accordingly or vote an **UNFAVORABLE** Report.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis
Legislative Chairman