

Opposition (UNF) to House Bill 0282
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Greetings Delegates,

My name is Molly Kaye. I am a resident of District 40 and a Maryland State-certified teacher with four years of experience teaching in Baltimore City Public Schools. As an educator, I had the privilege of working with students aged 4 to 14, witnessing and contributing to their growth and progress. Every day, I planned and taught lessons that adhered to district curriculum guidelines and state and national standards. I also built meaningful relationships with my students, grounded in acceptance and trust—both of which risk being eroded by this proposed bill.

In every teaching resource provided by state boards of education, age-appropriate content is clearly defined and tailored to specific ages and grade levels. This proposed bill, however, lacks such a definition. Who will determine what “age-appropriate” means? Without a clear standard, this bill opens the door to subjective and potentially discriminatory interpretations.

To put this in context, the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Miller v. California* defined obscenity as:

"Speech that is obscene and thus lacking First Amendment protection must be without serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. It also must appeal to the prurient interest in the view of an average person according to community standards and must describe sexual conduct or excretory functions in an offensive way."

This definition remains the law of the land, and this bill is not consistent with it. Furthermore, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) standards, including Standard 1C: Family Life and Human Sexuality (E1, E2, MS, HS), already provide detailed and grade-specific guidelines for age-appropriate content in this area. By failing to define “age-appropriate” within this bill, you risk enabling discriminatory practices in schools and libraries.

This concern is not hypothetical. According to PEN America, over 10,000 books were banned during the 2023–2024 school year. Under laws targeting “sexual content” similar to HB0282, books featuring LGBTQ+ characters, romantic themes, or discussions of sexual assault and abuse were disproportionately targeted. These actions deprive students of diverse perspectives, essential learning opportunities, and inclusive environments.

In my first year teaching I received a suicide note from a 8th grade lgbtq student who didnt see a way out of the discrimination and bullying they were facing because of who they liked. That student later told me they confided in me because I supported all of my students regardless of sexual/gender identity, race, and history. The books I kept in the classroom like “Julian is a Mermaid” by Jessica Love, “ Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag” by Rob Sanders and Steven Salerno, and Fun Home by Alison Bechdel helped this student know I would accept them and were intgeral parts of a trusting relationship. Specifically these books gave that student the history of LGBTQ advocates in the US, showing them that they could advocate for themselves, and detailing the life experiences of other LGBTQ people who’s struggles gave the student an inkling that life can be better and they could be a respected member of society. That student is thankfully still with us though I don’t know that would be the case if I was banned from including content a non-expert deemed non age appropriate.

Additionally, a similar situation happened with a colleague and their student who was in an unsafe situation with an adult who was hurting them, that student confided in my colleague by bringing them “Speak” a middle grade book by laurie Halse Anderson, that has been banned in 2023-24 14 times. Yet was able to help this student speak about her experiances and get help. Maryland’s Freedom to Read Act states, “a library should not prohibit or remove material from its catalogue because of partisan, ideological, or religious disapproval.”

I urge you to reconsider this bill and its potential impact on education, students, and educators. It is critical to ensure that our laws reflect both the legal precedent and the inclusive values we aim to uphold in Maryland’s schools and libraries.

Thank you for your time
Molly Kaye

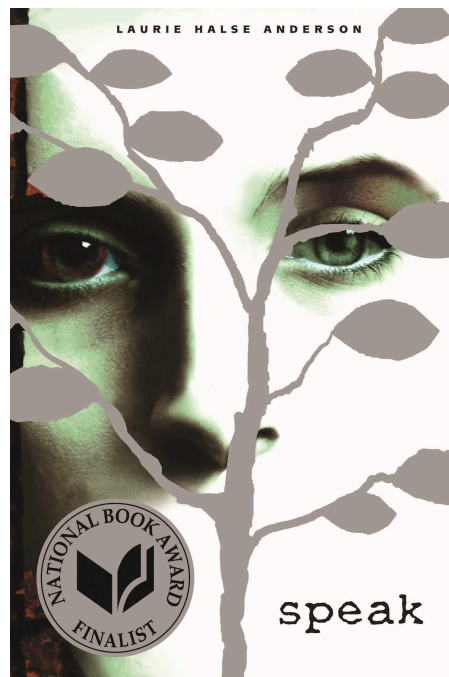
Pablo Picasso, Oil Painting, "the Women of Avignon"



"The Venus of Willendorf", Stone Age



"Speak" Novel By Laurie Halse Anderson,
National Book Award Finalist
Banned 14 times in 2024



My elementary students loved this book
It is banned in many states for Sexually explicit
Material

