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**BILL:** House Bill 282 - Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

**DATE:** January 21, 2025

**POSITION:** UNFAVORABLE

**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

**CONTACT:** Christine Feldmann | Annapolis Pride | [christine@annapolispride.org](mailto:christine@annapolispride.org)

The Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride **strongly opposes** House Bill 282, a piece of legislation that claims to protect children but instead employs misleading rhetoric to justify harmful and discriminatory policies. The bill relies on vague and subjective terms such as "sexually explicit" and "graphic depictions," creating a pathway for book bans and the suppression of diverse voices and perspectives.

House Bill 282 specifically targets and seeks to censor books that acknowledge the existence and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals. By falsely equating inclusivity with explicitness, it perpetuates a harmful narrative that further marginalizes already underrepresented groups.

Proponents of such censorship often argue that their efforts aim to protect children. While parents absolutely have the right to guide their own children's reading choices, no parent or small group of parents should dictate what books are available to other children. When book bans are implemented they restrict access for entire communities and undermine core values of freedom of thought and speech—principles essential to our republic.

Diverse perspectives, accurate cultural histories, and underrepresented voices must be shared. Everyone deserves the opportunity to see themselves represented in literature. These stories matter not only for individual validation and understanding but also for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Moreover, this bill undermines the role of highly trained educators and librarians. These hard working individuals use their expertise to select materials that are age appropriate, showcase diverse voices and encourage educational curiosity. They employ professional standards to decide which books to select for their readers. If this bill were to pass, they'd be forced to bring politics into how they choose materials.

Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County, ensuring that all individuals can live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable and anti-racist community where people of all identities can thrive. In alignment with these values, Annapolis Pride respectfully urges an unfavorable committee report on House Bill 282.

