

Testimony OPPOSE HB0282

Dear Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Cecile Taylor, RN and I reside in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB0282, which seeks to prohibit instructional materials with sexually explicit content.

I am opposed to this bill.

Firstly, I trust the media center professionals and teachers who are licensed and have been trained to differentiate between books or media that contain explicit sexual depictions of sex acts and books and medias that address the sexuality and life of LGBTQIA+ peers and families, such as gender versus sex, life of single-parents, same-gender, intergenerational, cohabitations, etc..

Secondly, isn't it the case that The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs recommended that Maryland schools equip students with the necessary tools to navigate our changing world? One tool is the access to books on LGBTQIA+. The Recommendation #3 states " an LGBTQIA+-inclusive curriculum to be taught as part of the state social studies and sexual education curriculum, and provide resources for developing LGBTQIA+-inclusive curricula for all other content areas and grade levels.. we recommend a statewide ban on book bans in all public libraries, including school libraries and classrooms....Teaching LGBTQIA+ history and culture is not only a powerful vehicle for achieving the state's instructional goals for social studies, it also improves school climate, culture and achievements for all students."

Ref. <https://goci.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/09/Recommendations-to-Support-LGBTQIA-Students-APPROVED.pdf>

I am a retired School Nurse and I have witnessed transgender students who felt ostracised by their peers for lack of understanding and respect of who they are. Not every LGBTQIA+ student who feels bullied comes to the health rooms. Many find refuge in books where they can find themselves. Books and other mediums provide a secure place. LGBTQIA+ students can learn in those books how to protect their personal boundaries, their identities, and feel that they are not the Unique Phenomenon of the school, but a real human being. Books allows teenagers to better grasp their own psychological development. There are serious negative consequences for not opening the door to LGBTQIA+ students and to the teenagers who try to understand who they are. Schools must open the doors to students, not close them.

Books and medias that address the sexuality of LGBTQIA+ peers and families are discussed in the safe space that is a school. Those discussion allow all students to reflect, analyse, discuss, discover that peers and families may be different from theirs, and lean to respect them. It convoys critical thinking, respect for one another, increased school harmony and better school achievement for all.

I hope that my testimony will allow you to oppose the HB 0282 bill that is aimed at prohibiting sexually explicit material in public schools and media centers but would be potentially harmful to many children.

Cecile Taylor