



House Bill 282
Public Schools – Sexually Explicit Materials – Prohibited in
Libraries and Media Centers
January 23, 2025
Against

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC) is opposed to HB282, which like similar legislation across the country, would be used to censor books that uplift age-appropriate LGBTQ+ stories and stories by and about people of color

TRAC is a Maryland based, and entirely trans-led coalition committed to ensuring that all transgender and gender expansive Marylanders can live safe and affirming lives. Our membership includes healthcare providers, attorneys, academics, organizers and other community members who all stand in strong support for protecting kids from harmful material.

For most people hearing about the title of this legislation, they would assume that there were not already systems in place to avoid this type of harmful material in schools and libraries. This is false, and similar legislation across the county has been overtly used to remove stories written by queer people and remove stories based entirely on secondary characteristics of characters in stories. For example, PEN America reports that of the picture book titles banned in 2022, 74% featured LGBTQ characters and 46% feature characters of color or discuss race and racism.¹ These stories reflect important lessons and representation for our youth and will allow them to engage with and learn from different perspectives.

Not only do these book bans target protected identity groups, in some cases, similar bills have even been utilized to remove religious texts, including the bible from public schools, citing text to show that these religious texts would not be appropriate for younger audiences.

Maryland, like most states, already has mechanisms in place to address graphic material in school settings and libraires. Looking at the fallout of similar legislation, this bill would be weaponized by those who wish to demonize queer literature and books written by people of color. In every state that has enacted similar legislation, there have been bad faith attacks on literature that waste already limited school resources addressing these complaints, during a time of proposed budget cuts to schools.

For all the reasons, we strongly urge against supporting HB 282.

Sincerely,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition

¹ Pen America, *Banned in the USA: State Laws Supercharge Book Suppression in Schools* (April 20, 2023), <http://pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/>.