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District 13

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HB 282, Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials -
Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

1/23/2025

TO: Chair Atterbeary and members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Ayla Hurley

Chair Atterbeary and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, my name is Ayla Hurley, I live in Columbia, Maryland, and I am writing to urge you to oppose HB 0282, ostensibly prohibiting vaguely-defined “sexually explicit materials” from grade school libraries and media centers.

Nobody is pushing for explicit pornography in childrens’ libraries. But what is considered “age-appropriate” by moral crusaders often ignores the fact that self-identity is not inherently sexual in nature. However, depictions and acceptance of non-heterosexual attractions, feelings, and relationships has historically been categorized as “immoral” by those who wish to erase their existence, and this bill would simply be a furtherance of that goal.

This bill indicates that it will define “sexually explicit materials as books and auditory and visual material that contain graphic or obscene depictions of sexual activity that are not age-appropriate or used as part of the approved instructional materials for instruction on family life and human sexuality as part of a certain program, etc.” However, the harm this bill can and will cause will come down to who gets to define “sexually explicit” and the decidedly non-sexual identities this undoubtedly will unfairly include.

Invariably, bans that exclude representations of different ways of being - whether that is attraction, romance, or even family structures - leave children feeling that they are alone, wrong, or bad. Without healthy representation in the media available to them, LGBTQ+ children are left to their own devices to find connection and self-worth. While none of these things seem “sexually explicit,” repeatedly LGBTQ+ depictions, sexual or otherwise, have been deemed so by people, by leaders, determined to hide anything that falls outside of a heteronormative scope in an effort to “protect the children.”

I urge you not to be taken by such a fear-mongering pitfall. Your LGBTQ+ constituents see through it, and we do not trust that it would be used in good faith. Please do not support this unnecessary book-banning bill.