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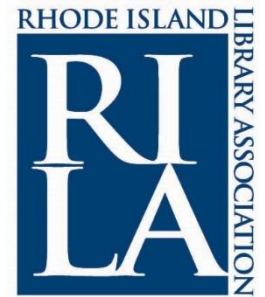
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### H5739 OPPOSE

March 27, 2023

Rhode Island General Assembly  
House Education Committee



Dear Chair McNamara, Vice Chairs Noret, Kislak, and Members

In accordance with the [American Library Association \(ALA\) statement issued on August 18, 2021](#), the Rhode Island Library Association (RILA) is committed to upholding our core values, which include equitable access to knowledge, social justice, and intellectual freedom. As members of a profession committed to free and equitable access to information and the pursuit of truth, we stand firm in opposing any effort to suppress knowledge, to label “controversial” views, or dictate what is orthodox in history, politics, or belief. As such, RILA strongly opposes H5739. This legislation, as proposed, pretends to protect civil rights in education, but in reality seeks to erase history, ignore science, and silence Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, as well as the LGBT community. Efforts, such as H5739, to censor any consideration or discussion of racism, slavery, Black American history, Indigenous history, and related issues and concerns in our schools, colleges, and universities pose a real and present threat to libraries’ ability to fulfill their role as trusted community institutions that provide factual and accurate information that reflects the breadth of the American experience about these topics.

The consequences of this bill would impact student personal and academic development because it:

- Fact 1: Forces librarians to go against the [American Library Association Core Values](#) of the Freedom to Read by purging collections of books that share the authentic experiences of human beings who happen to be people of color or LGBT people.
- Fact 2: Ignores the [research](#) that shows students will enjoy reading more and increase their reading comprehension skills when they have choice in what they read.
- Fact 3: Disregards the fact that [the demographics of public school students](#) is rapidly changing so that the minorities, especially Hispanic students, are becoming the majority. Students should have the opportunity to see themselves reflected in what they read as well as read stories of different cultures and people as part of their personal, social, and educational development.

- Fact 4: Forces teachers to ignore white supremacy and the well-documented history of violence and discrimination against black, indigenous, and other people of color.
- Fact 5: Prevents teachers from [creating a safe learning environment](#) for all students where they are free to express and explore their own identities.
- Fact 6: Disallows teachers to teach students media literacy skills such as how to identify bias, propaganda, and fact vs. opinion, [essential skills in today's world where misinformation and disinformation in news media and social media content is rampant](#) and threatening our democracy.
- Fact: 7: Fails to comprehend that national and state content area standards, curriculum, and textbooks used for instruction are [district responsibilities](#) and unfairly targets teachers for punishment.

A commitment to intellectual freedom requires that libraries not only protect the truth from suppression, but also prevent its distortion. We oppose any legislative proposal or local initiative intended to ban instruction, consideration, or discussion about the role of racism in the history of the United States or how systemic racism manifests itself in our schools, workplaces, and government agencies.

The Rhode Island Library Association opposes H5739 and any proposal to censor information resources, curricula, or programs addressing racial injustice, Black American history, indigenous history, and diversity education.