

Steven Sepe

From: Kelly Parlin <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 9:35 AM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: Support for HB #5726: RI Freedom to Read Act

Committee State Government Clerk,

My name is Kelly Parlin, and I support HB #5726: RI Freedom to Read Act.

I am a Cranston resident and a youth services librarian who has worked at public libraries in Rhode Island for 8 years.

In the wake of attempts to censor materials, as well as to censor librarians across the country, it is of critical importance that this bill be passed.

I like to explain censorship by using an analogy.

Let us say I am a parent, and my child is lactose intolerant. Censorship would have me declare, "I don't want my child to be exposed to dairy, so no child should have dairy." And that isn't right, is it? In this country, a parent has authority over their own children, but not over other parents' children. That is unlawful overreaching.

Of course, there are a lot of people out there looking to censor materials because they are trying to protect children, and that is a wonderful intention. But censorship is not the answer.

After all, what is accomplished when a child is "protected" from reading a book about a different race, for example? Wouldn't the lack of exposure make the topic stranger, and more easily dismissed and disparaged? And couldn't that result in painful interactions in the real world, where a child will encounter different races?

As a librarian, I am not forcing books on children, because that is not only against my profession, but it is also another example of unlawful overreaching. My job is simply to provide access to a variety of materials—a variety of options, choices—and leave it up to parents to decide what their children are allowed to consume.

This country was founded on the principles of free speech, free inquiry, and the right to form and express our own opinions. That means that we are free to make our own choices for our

own lives, but we do not have the right to take away choices from others, especially in a public library that serves the entire community.

Please support HB #5726: RI Freedom to Read Act.

Thank you for your time,
Kelly Parlin

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