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## ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT/AMEND

### TESTIMONY ON 26-S 2078, RELATING TO EDUCATION – THE SCHOOL LIBRARIES ACT March 4, 2026

The statement of policy that introduces this legislation lays out the importance of school libraries to students and their role in a democratic society. Their additional role in promoting freedom of inquiry and access to a diversity of views and viewpoints cannot be overstated. The ACLU of Rhode Island therefore supports this legislation for recognizing the key goal of school libraries in promoting the academic, social, and intellectual growth of young people.

We do wish to offer one minor clarifying amendment to the proposed bill. Language at the top of Page 3 calls on school libraries to have an adequate collection of books “in order that every student is offered a range of choices to meet their reading interests and reading level *and that also supports the teaching and learning priorities of the school.*” (emphasis added)

While we understand the purpose of the italicized language, we are also very cognizant of the wave of censorship battles facing public school libraries across the country, and which prompted passage of the Freedom to Read Act last year by this body. Our concern is that would-be censors might nonetheless attempt to use that language to seek the removal of books from school libraries on the grounds that the “range of choices” that should be available are only those that support “the teaching and learning priorities of the school.” This misinterpretation could be eliminated by making a minor tweak, such as by saying, “*including* materials that support the teaching and learning priorities of the school.”

We realize that this concern is probably overblown in light of the separate presence of the Freedom to Read Act in state law, but we nonetheless wish to offer this amendment to eliminate any doubt.

In any event, the ACLU of RI supports this bill’s goal of promoting school libraries.