

Submitter: Donald Powers
On Behalf Of: Keep Our Children Safe
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Headlines about book banning continue to frame the conversation nationally. But another underlying question rarely gets discussed: Are graphic, sexually explicit books really available in our children's public schools? Parents have trusted schools for many years with their child's custodial care and education. Only recently did parents realize they needed to carefully vet the books their children were reading in classes and school libraries. Parents are accustomed to schools obtaining parental permission before exposing their children to any potentially indecent media, including PG-13 movies. Therefore, many parents wrongfully assumed their children were protected from any content above a PG-13 rating in their schools. Yet many books in school settings contain explicit sexual passages and images that violate opt-in policy for sex education. For example, students are currently exposed to detailed instruction on various sexual acts, including with multiple partners, etc. through library and classroom books without any parental permission, warnings or preventative education on sexually transmitted diseases. This is dangerous, irresponsible, and unlawful.

Parents retain the fundamental rights and duty to exercise primary control over the care, supervision, upbringing, and education of their children. This further establishes the "rebuttable presumption" (something to be assumed until the evidence suggests otherwise) that "parent's decisions are in the child's best interests." I agree parents as the experts on what is appropriate for their children. Materials containing a "description or depiction of illicit sex or sexual immorality," which is defined as "human genitals in a state of sexual stimulation or arousal; Acts of human masturbation, sexual intercourse, or sodomy; and Fondling or other erotic touching of human genitals or pubic region" have no value for minors. This means such materials are indecent per se, they do not need to be reviewed as a whole for serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

My goal is to protect our children, teachers and librarians from explicit sexual content. This content is extremely harmful; it creates addictive pathways in children's developing brains. There are explicit descriptions of sexual assault that trigger survivors and are too heavy for the innocent to carry. A plethora of research confirms that indecent and pornographic material can cause girls to be afraid of being female, and paints a negative view of sex for many who have yet to experience the blessings of healthy and committed intimacy.

The First Amendment protects lawful speech, not vulgar content declared to have no value to minors. Our society already rates media, such as movies, music, video

games and TV. There is no public outcry that movie ratings destroy freedom of speech, because parental guidance is publicly accepted. Taxpayer funded schools have no legal right to override parental discretion with criminally indecent and pornographic books.

I want our children to have the freedom to read and learn without being unwittingly assaulted by graphic, sexualized, and unlawful content. Porn is a billion dollar industry. Let's not support it in our schools.

Keep our children safe.

Sinceely,

Don Powers