

Submitter: Angela Harkness
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

Dear Committee,

For the record, I am Angela Harkness and I'm writing today as both a parent and an educator of 20 years in strong support of SB 1098. This bill is essential in protecting the rights of students to access diverse and inclusive reading materials without undue interference.

Our school libraries are already guided by the Library Bill of Rights, which ensures that collections reflect a broad range of ideas and perspectives, free from partisan or ideological censorship. Likewise, classroom libraries are supported by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Right to Read statement, which upholds students' fundamental right to explore literature that challenges them, expands their worldviews, and fosters critical thinking.

Educators and librarians are trained professionals who curate materials to support student learning, literacy, and personal growth. Allowing school boards or special interest groups with agendas to override these expert decisions introduces unnecessary barriers and risks turning book selection into a political battleground instead of an educational process.

Restricting access to books, whether in school or classroom libraries, deprives students of the opportunity to see themselves in literature, understand others' experiences, and develop essential literacy skills. Our children deserve an education that equips them for the complexities of the world—not one shaped by arbitrary censorship.

I urge you to support SB 1098 to uphold the rights of students, respect the expertise of educators and librarians, and prevent anyone from undermining intellectual freedom in our schools.