



SB24-049suzette benish to: committees.lcs.ga@coleg.gov 02/26/2024 12:56 PMPlease respond to "suzette benish"

Honored members of the Colorado Legislature,

I would like to address the consideration of SB 25-049 concerning the protection of libraries and librarians. My name is Suzette Baker and I am the former head librarian of the Kingsland branch of the Llano County Library System. I am also a U S. Army veteran. I took an oath to protect the constitution even to the ultimate sacrifice. I still believe on that oath.

Our library was attacked by a group of people who viewed their own beliefs outweigh the freedoms and rights. They use the battle cry "save the children". Which if it was true, is an honorable quest. But if you read what the oppose, they are trying to oppress ideas they are diametrically against. Ideas such as LGBT+, racism, and self expression.

This is an organized movement using the Internet to spread a downloadable hate speech guideline. They will stand up reading experts of books taking them out of context and misrepresenting the stories. This is a "plug and play" form of hate speech.

These stories are a vital part of our culture. They foster understanding of lifestyles and ideas which we may not normally be exposed to. Stories that give voice to the richness and diversity of American culture. A chance to walk in someone else's shoes. Books that we have the right to read.

I ask you to protect the libraries and librarians that protect our constitutional right to knowledge.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

February 8, 2024

Senator Cutter, Senator Kolker, Representative Joseph and Representative Hamrick:

I am writing to thank you for sponsoring SB24-049, and for supporting our libraries and our right to read whatever we chose. As a life-long reader and retired educator of 40 years, I know the value of having access to information be it within the pages of a book, a periodical, a database, by electronic means or through online access. I had the joy of being a teacher-librarian for 20 of my 40 years, so can easily recognize knowledge to be the key to curiosity and successful learning.

Although most school districts and library systems have policies in place with regards to challenging library materials, SB24-049 will ensure that these policies will be followed accordingly, especially with respect to an individual's request to ban a book, especially when without merit. Discrimination and censorship in our libraries simply cannot, nor should be tolerated.

Thank-you,

Susan Gilbert



JAMES IRWIN CHARTER SCHOOLS

Character Development and Academic Excellence

February 23, 2024

Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to you today as a leader within the James Irwin Charter Schools network, a position that affords me a unique perspective on the potential impacts of the proposed legislation concerning the establishment of committees for the reconsideration of library resources within our schools. Our network operates with multiple authorizers, a structure that has served us well in meeting the diverse needs of our students and communities. However, the bill under consideration poses significant challenges to our operations and, by extension, the educational experience we offer.

The bill suggests granting district superintendents the authority to establish committees responsible for the reconsideration of library resources. For a charter network like James Irwin, which is currently authorized by three different bodies, this proposal introduces a layer of complexity that could significantly impede our ability to manage educational content effectively. Each authorizer could potentially interpret and implement these committees differently, leading to inconsistencies in how resources are evaluated and approved across our network. This fragmentation could undermine our efforts to provide a coherent and unified educational approach, an essential factor in our success to date.

Moreover, as we plan for growth and consider adding more authorizers to our network, the proposed bill threatens to compound these challenges, making it increasingly difficult to navigate the regulatory landscape and maintain the quality and consistency of our educational offerings. The diversity of committee interpretations and decisions could lead to a patchwork of standards and approvals, complicating our curriculum development and resource allocation efforts.

It is important to note that our charter board already functions in a capacity similar to the committees proposed by the bill. It actively engages with the public, including parents, to hear concerns and make informed decisions regarding the approval, removal, or disapproval of books and curriculum. This existing structure ensures that decisions about educational content are made by individuals deeply familiar with our network's mission, values, and the communities we serve, thereby safeguarding the integrity and relevance of our educational materials.

In light of these considerations, I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the implications of this bill for charter schools like James Irwin. Imposing a one-size-fits-all approach to the reconsideration of library resources fails to account for the unique structures and needs of



JAMES IRWIN CHARTER SCHOOLS

Character Development and Academic Excellence

charter networks, potentially stifling innovation and growth within this vital sector of our educational system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am available to discuss these concerns further and to provide any additional information the committee may require.

Sincerely,

Rob Daugherty
Chief Executive Officer
James Irwin Charter Schools

Senator Cutter, Senator Kolker, Representative Joseph and Representative Hamrick:

I am writing in support of SB24-049, Content of Material in Libraries. I have been a library user since childhood and have worked as a paraprofessional in libraries for over 30 years, most recently as a high school library media technician. I consider libraries to be the great equalizer for our communities by making ideas and information available to all. Information is power and through libraries all citizens have access to information they need to make their lives better through books, internet access, and community engagement.

The recent increase of book banning and attacks on libraries and their staff across the country is alarming. As Coloradans, we must act to protect access to the materials in our libraries and give protections to the people who work in them. SB24-049 gives a framework for conversation and communication that respects an individual's right to free speech and expression but also protects the rights of the community.

Thank you.

My name is Dr. Rich Guggenheim. I am the Colorado Chapter leader of Gays Against Groomers. A nonprofit organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals who oppose indoctrination, sexualization, and medicalization of children under the guise of LGBTQ+.

We at Gays Against Groomers are strong advocates for the First Amendment and in Article II Section 10 of the Colorado State Constitution.

We also believe that parents have the primary responsibility to raise and educate their children as they see fit. Schools are a tool in that process, and parental rights in directing their child's education and upbringing are inalienable. Schools' primary responsibility should be in educating, not indoctrinating children and providing them with the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed as adults in society. To facilitate in this process, we believe that the books and materials used in schools and in classrooms should be educational and age appropriate.

This bill would create a new level of bureaucracy and would limit parents' right to direct the education of their children. It would limit a school or school board's ability to remove material that is not educational or age appropriate from the school's library or classroom. Instead, this bill would place that authority in the hands of an appointed board with no accountability or oversight. Thus this bill would make it more difficult to remove materials that are deemed, by parents, to be inappropriate or obscene from school's libraries and classrooms. This bill further erodes the rights of parents and the trust between schools and their communities.

For these reasons, we urge a strong NO vote on SB24-049

I work in a public library and am naturally concerned by the increase in challenges to books in library collections and to the efforts by some groups to control what everyone has access to.

When I was a child, I spent a lot of time at my local public library. I've always been an avid reader and the library was a treasure trove of books. A treasure trove I only had full access to because my parent filled out paperwork to allow me access to more than just the children's section of the library. (A default restriction that so angered my mother that she didn't patronize the library herself.)

As a child, I was just glad to have access to all those books. Now, as an adult, and especially as a library professional, I realize how backwards it was that parents had to opt their children *into* having access. No wonder my mother was so incensed.

What children read should be in their family's hands, not the library's, and certainly not some out-of-state group interested in restricting what all children can read. Parents who want to know what their kids are reading should accompany them to the library and actively engage with what they check out. Trying to place that responsibility on other people will never work out to anyone's satisfaction—not the parents' or the library's.

As a library professional, I don't want to be in the position of deciding what's appropriate for someone else's child. Nor do I want to have to explain that popular and well regarded books have been removed from the library because they were challenged by someone who doesn't live in this state, much less my community. And I would think most parents would be unhappy with someone else deciding what is appropriate for their child. My mother certainly was.

I hope this bill will help keep decisions about library collections in the hands of libraries and their communities. And help keep decisions about what a child reads in their family's hands.



February 6, 2024

Colorado Senate Committee on Education

SCR 357, Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax Avenue, Denver, CO 80203

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I write to you on behalf of GLSEN, the leading national organization on LGBTQI+ issues in K-12 education. GLSEN is committed to ensuring that all youth – including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, nonbinary, Two-Spirit, and intersex youth – have equal opportunities to thrive, grow, and reach their full potential. GLSEN works to build safe and affirming learning environments for LGBTQI+ youth while advancing racial, gender, and disability justice in education settings.

GLSEN supports S.B.049 and urges the committee to support the effort by the sponsors to curb censorship and book bans in Colorado libraries. The bill prohibits the removal of school library materials in order to uplift a political agenda and/or dismiss diverse experiences.

PEN America's Index of School Book Bans collected 1,477 instances of book bans in states across the country in the first six months of the 2022-23 school year alone. Over 800 unique titles were taken from classroom shelves, many books were removed without implementing a comprehensive review process.¹ Books by and about LGBTQ+ people and people of color are disproportionately impacted by book bans. This is more than just removing diverse books from our classrooms; ideologically motivated book bans promote an atmosphere of repression and fear amongst students. This conclusion is supported by the U.S. Department of Education which found that hostile school environments can be created during the library book screening process.² In contrast, when the diversity of our nation is presented in the classroom and available to students in school libraries, students find themselves reflected in what they are learning and gain greater understanding of the broader communities within Colorado. This can create safer and more inclusive school environments, reducing bullying and harassment for marginalized students and ensuring all children have a greater opportunity to learn.

We cannot allow for a rollback of educational freedom to take hold in Colorado. We call on the Senate Education Committee to support S.B. 49 and protect against bigoted attempts to limit what our students can access in school libraries. Should you have any questions about the above information, please feel free to reach out to Rin Alajaji, State and Local Policy Manager, via email at rin.alajaji@glsen.org.
Sincerely,

Brian Dittmeier
Director of Public Policy
GLSEN

¹ <https://pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/>

² Available at U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, "U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Resolves Investigation of the Removal of Library Books in Forsyth County Schools in Georgia," May 19, 2023, <https://bit.ly/4bpPc7f>

Distinguished Members of the Colorado State Senate,

I am writing to express CASB and D51's strong opposition to Senate Bill 24-049, titled "Content of Materials in Libraries." The CASB Board of Directors has voted to oppose this bill due to our concerns regarding its potential infringement on the authority granted to locally elected Boards of Education by the Colorado Constitution.

While we acknowledge the importance of addressing concerns related to the content of materials in libraries, such decisions should remain within the purview of local school boards. Local school boards are elected by the community and are uniquely positioned to understand the diverse needs, values, and perspectives of their constituents.

SB24-049, as currently proposed, centralizes the decision-making process and restricts the autonomy of locally elected school boards. This raises significant concerns about the erosion of local control, a principle that has been fundamental to the success of our education system in Colorado. Our state's Constitution entrusts local school boards with the authority to make decisions that reflect the values and preferences of the communities they serve.

The proposed legislation could lead to unintended consequences, including potential conflicts between state mandates and the diverse educational needs of different communities. By placing additional restrictions on the content of materials in libraries at the state level, there is a risk of stifling local innovation and responsiveness to individual school districts' unique educational goals and cultural contexts. Most, if not all, school districts are addressing these issues in Board Policy.

We urge the Colorado State Senate to carefully consider the potential impact of SB24-049 on the constitutional authority granted to local school boards. A collaborative approach involving local communities, educators, and elected officials is essential to address concerns related to library materials while respecting the principles of local governance.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and your dedication to the well-being of Colorado's education system. We urge you to reconsider the provisions of SB24-049 and work towards a solution that preserves the vital role of locally elected school boards in shaping the educational experiences of our students.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Andrea Haitz, President
Board of Education
Mesa County Valley School District 51
Colorado Association of School Board, Region 10 Director

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Jan Knauer. I am a librarian and a resident of Douglas County, Colorado. I am also a co-founder of the Douglas County FReadom Defenders, a community group that formed last year in response to attacks against LGBTQ materials in our local public library. I am writing to register our group's support of SB24-049, "Content of Materials in Libraries."

The Freedom Fathers, a conservative Christian men's group, launched a campaign to remove LGBTQ materials from Douglas County Libraries in April 2023. The book banners claimed that several award-winning books with LGBTQ characters were "pornography" and accused library staff of "indoctrination" and "grooming children." One of them even called for a bonfire to burn these books.

The Douglas County FReadom Defenders formed soon after. We circulated a petition asking the library board of trustees to keep these challenged materials on the library shelves. Our petition gathered more than 1,700 signatures, demonstrating just how unpopular book banning is – even among conservative constituents. Ultimately, the library director and board of trustees refused to remove these materials.

This isn't how the story always ends. That's why the Douglas County FReadom Defenders support legislation that codifies the First Amendment right to read in Colorado. All Coloradans should have the right to read, no matter who is elected to their local school or library board.

Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Jan Knauer