

Testimony - HB19-1048

- **Where:** House Transportation & Local Government Committee on Wednesday, Feb 6, at 1:30 p.m. in HCR 0112.
- Thank you Mr Chair (Rep. Matt Gray) and Committee members.
- My name is James LaRue (jlarue@jlarue.com). My background:
 - As a library administrator, I reported to library boards from 1985 through 2014, in both Illinois and in Colorado.
 - With board members of Douglas and Arapahoe libraries, I have presented at national conferences on best practices of library board performance
 - As a consultant, I have delivered many hundreds of hours of training around the country about these practices.
- I am speaking against 1048. Why?
 - According to Pew Research, librarians are one of only three professions still trusted in our nation, along with firefighters and nurses.
 - Why are libraries so admired? Because they offer collections, programs, and meeting room spaces to be used by anyone and everyone, regardless of their politics.
 - Often, when I ask board members what political party their colleagues belong to, they really don't know. It doesn't, and it shouldn't matter.
 - Libraries build knowledge and social capital, not partisan political advantage.
 - Even supposedly non-partisan races--like school boards--have in Colorado turned overtly partisan and divided their communities, often bitterly.
 - Colorado's public libraries have survived for over a hundred years without elected boards. And they consistently rank among the best in the nation. Two thirds of all Coloradans have a public library card--a remarkable testimony for a government service whose use is completely voluntary.
 - In short, HB 1048 doesn't addresses a real problem. Countywide elections can cost from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars, money better spent on materials and staff. We don't need to politicize an institution that should be open to all, regardless of political views.
 - HB 1048 would divert public money from the library mission, and erode trust in one of our most respected public institutions.
 - I urge you to oppose this ill-considered legislation.
 - Thank you.