



March 26, 2025

RE: Support for SB25-063 Library Resource Decision Standards for Public Schools

Chairperson Lukens and members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB25-063 Library Resource Decision Standards for Public Schools. The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado promotes justice, religious liberty, and interfaith understanding through building relationships in order to educate, advocate, and catalyze social change. We are an interfaith public policy and advocacy organization with over 400 congregations in our statewide network, representing over two dozen faith traditions.

People of faith and conscience across our state understand the importance of fighting for religious and intellectual freedom and how banning books from schools undermines those freedoms. Censorship is profoundly alienating and diminishes that which is most cherished and sacred to our democratic values. It fosters an environment in which ignorance, misinformation, and discrimination are allowed to flourish.

Storytelling is at the heart of human understanding. When we can tell our stories to each other, we have the opportunity to be understood and to find common ground. We have the opportunity to better understand ourselves and our world.

Book challenges in school libraries deprive young people of the ability to better understand themselves and their world. They remove important stories and experiences from the discourse in our communities, schools, and homes. Whether these attempts at censorship are successful or not, they send a harmful message to our young people that some stories are not worth telling, including theirs.

It is in that spirit that we respectfully urge a Yes vote on SB25-063.

Thank you,

Shara Smith, Chief Executive Officer
Interfaith Alliance of Colorado

House Education

03/26/2025 Upon Adjournment

SB25-063 Library Resource Decision Standards for Public Sch

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Linnea Burson For themselves	I am in support of this bill.
Linnea Burson For themselves	support this bill because access to literature is essential for the intellectual development, reading skills, and critical thinking skills of all people, including children. I do not believe in censorship. No one voted for Mom's for Liberty or for citizens giving themselves the right to ban books and determine what my child may read and may not read. As a responsible parent, I will decide that for my own child
Toby Ertelt For themselves	<p>My name is Toby Ertelt. I'm a Colorado resident and a K-12 public school librarian for 19 years and public school educator for 26 years. I'm writing to show my support for SB 25-063, and urge you to stand up for the right to read in our state.</p> <p>The freedom to read is of utmost importance to me. Intellectual freedom encompasses the right to seek and receive information from all points of view. Libraries have historically served as the beacons of intellectual freedom by providing equal access to information and materials. For many students, access to the public libraries is limited due to time and distance constraints, making school libraries their primary resource.</p> <p>School libraries not only enhance a child's intellectual freedom, but also fosters empathy and metacognition through a robust collection, programs, and opportunities. As Dr. Rudine Sims</p>

	<p>Bishop states, "Children need windows and mirrors. They need mirrors in which they see themselves and windows through which they see the world." Reading builds empathy and self-awareness enabling children to connect with characters and experiences that broaden their understanding of the world. Watching students pick up a book and devour it because of that connection and then watch as they share their enthusiasm with others is an uplifting experience.</p> <p>One that should not be shuttered, but be shared.</p> <p>Support of SB25-063 ensures that public school libraries can continue to be a pillar of intellectual freedom, allowing school librarians and school paraprofessionals to provide access to books of all perspectives. A diverse collection of books not only enhances students' social emotional growth, but also boosts academic performance.</p> <p>Research shows that students with access to well-resourced school libraries perform better academically and score higher on standardized tests. By supporting public school libraries and librarians, SB25-063 creates structures that foster a well-rounded collection, thereby improving students' learning and academic success.</p> <p>(1)</p> <p>I am proud to be a Coloradan, and I hope you will support SB 25-063 so our state can join the many others that have passed "right to read" legislation. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.</p> <p>Sincerely, Toby Ertelt 1 (Martinez, April 18,2024, american progress.org)</p>
<p>Rae Ciciora</p>	<p>Dear members of Colorado state legislature,</p>

<p>For themselves</p>	<p>I am writing in support of SB25-063 Library Resource Decision Standards for Public Schools:</p> <p>Concerning standards that public schools are required to include in policies regarding library resources.</p> <p>Creating and using a standard of materials selection for schools will protect students and staff in multiple ways.</p> <p>By having an approved standard of what library materials can be offered in a school library, students and their families can be assured that the items in the collection meet the needs and interests of their children. It ensures that materials will not be of poor quality, the materials will meet the pedagogical needs of the students, and that if the material is deemed inappropriate by a student or family member, then there is an established and impartial means to challenge the material.</p> <p>In addition, this bill supports the school staff making selections of materials for inclusion in a school library collection. Library staff are invested in making appropriate choices for new material. By having a district selection standard, librarians can make confident choices in choosing new material. Should a title or material in the library be challenged, the challenge process required by this bill will protect the librarian from retribution during a challenge process.</p> <p>This bill does not have any fiscal impacts but will have great positive benefits to the students and librarians of the state of Colorado. Please vote in favor of SB25-063.</p> <p>Rae Ciciora School district library coordinator Colorado resident</p>
<p>Erin Meschke Against themselves</p>	<p>madam chair and members of the committee,</p> <p>thank you for the opportunity to speak. my name is erin meschke, i live in boulder, and represent myself. while i have great doubt t</p>

	<p>written testimony is actually read by committees, i am teaching rollerskating at an elementary school every morning for the next two weeks so am submitting written testimony in case i'm not finished before my name is called to testify remotely.</p> <p>since the senate education committee changed upon the retirements of senators fields and buckner, who voted against SB24-049 which was last year's defeated version of this bill, SB25-063 was set up to pass. i'm asking you to protect colorado children from pornography disguised as "inclusive" graphic novels and the misuse of the safety clause by voting no.</p> <p>I will lead with the most important point: no one is trying to ban books. no one is restricting your ability to privately buy or read a book. what some parents and community members have been doing and will continue to do is insist books available to children in schools are appropriate and align with standards already in place for materials blocked both online and in print by federal standards protecting children. books currently being challenged are not contested based on authorship but because of CONTENT that is both pornographic, sexually explicit, and aimed at minors.</p> <p>On page three, lines three and four say that "a range of books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, education, and enlightenment of all students". The majority of books being challenged, however, graphically portray sex, pedophilia, rape, incest, and other things that have nothing to do with developmentally appropriate "interest, education, or enlightenment". on page three, lines seventeen and eighteen say that removing library resources prevents others from examining, enjoying, and learning but no one should be enjoying pornographic graphic novels at school.</p> <p>with no policy guidelines in the bill, library boards can make whatever policy they want as long as it's published online. some libraries could chose impossible challenge requirements and others could allow liberal removal of challenged materials. making challenge requests available through CORA could have a chilling effect, but that is probably the intent.</p> <p>the challenge process and library policy may need to be formalized but SB25-063 does not give needed guidance nor does it limit perverse materials currently in or making their way into school</p>
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	libraries so i ask you to protect our kids, communities, and the integrity of our libraries by rejecting SB25-063. thank you.
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Penguin
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Written Testimony in Support of SB25-063
Submitted to the Colorado House Education Committee
Skip Dye
Chair, Intellectual Freedom Task Force
Senior Vice President, Library Sales & Digital Strategy
Penguin Random House

March 24, 2025

Chair Lukens, Vice Chair Martinez, and Members of the Colorado House Education Committee,

I submit this testimony on behalf of Penguin Random House and as Chair, Intellectual Freedom Task Force, to express our staunch support for Senate Bill 25-063. This legislation protects the freedom to read in Colorado's public schools by prohibiting book bans and censorship based on the race, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other protected status of the individuals represented in the material. As the world's largest trade book publisher, Penguin Random House has seen firsthand how efforts to remove books from schools and libraries have escalated into an alarming national crisis, threatening students' rights to learn, explore ideas, and see themselves represented in the books they read.

Protect Intellectual Freedom in Colorado

Over the past two academic years, Colorado schools have seen over a 50% increase in book challenges, as reported by PEN America. This surge to remove books from schools disproportionately targets literature written by and about LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, women, and other historically marginalized communities. Many challenges are started by groups seeking to impact public institutions that serve diverse communities. These book challenges are not about protecting students—they are about erasing their identities and experiences.

Affirm and Protect First Amendment Rights

Senate Bill 25-063 affirms First Amendment rights and ensures that educators and librarians—not outside political groups—remain responsible for making decisions about age-relevant materials in public schools. Specifically, this bill:

- Upholds First Amendment protections by ensuring that book challenges cannot be used as a tool to discriminate against marginalized communities.

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- Prohibits book bans based on race, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other protected status of the individuals represented in the book's content.
- Requires public school districts to follow clear, transparent guidelines when considering the removal of books from classrooms or libraries.
- Affirms that parents have the right to guide their own child's reading choices but do not have the right to dictate what is available to all students.

Censorship harms student learning, critical thinking, and access to diverse perspectives. Banning books does not shield students from difficult topics—it only ensures they encounter them without guidance, context, or the opportunity for informed discussion. A study from The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) emphasizes that diverse books help students build empathy by exposing them to lives and experiences different from their own. The American Psychological Association (APA) reports that representation in literature can have profound effects on identity formation and self-esteem. When students see characters who share their background, challenges, or identity, they are more likely to feel validated, accepted, and empowered. SB25-063 supports the precedent that students retain their rights to free expression and access to information in public schools. The Supreme Court case *Board of Education v. Pico* (1982) ruled that school officials cannot remove books from libraries due to disagreement with the ideas they contain. Colorado has a chance to uphold this principle at the state level.

Yes, to SB25-063

Colorado's State Constitution upholds the right to free expression, similar to the protections of the First Amendment, by stating that "...every person shall be free to speak, write or publish whatever he will on any subject." Legislators now have the opportunity to guarantee that all students have access to diverse and representative literature with the passage of SB25-063.

I urge the members of the House Education Committee to vote YES on SB25-063 and stand with students, educators, and families in protecting the freedom to read.

Sincerely,

Skip Dye

Chair, Intellectual Freedom Task Force

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