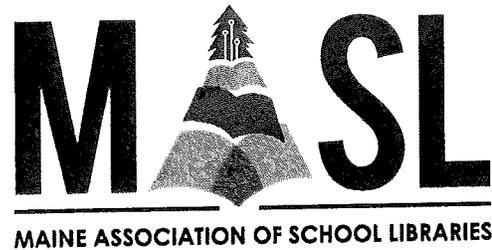


May 4, 2023



Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee:

My name is Heather Perkinson and I am a librarian with 28 years of experience in libraries and schools. I also represent, as president of the Maine Association of School Libraries, all school library personnel in the state.

I urge you to vote against LD 123, which proposes to override local decisions about all materials used in our schools. We already have existing processes in place that work: the IJJ policy that every school district holds ensures that reasonable requests for the removal of materials can be considered. Such policies also require that material be viewed in its entirety and that local committee members rationally decide whether it should stay or go. This legislation would override that entire process and require that the state, instead of local school boards and educators, make that decision. This is clearly a reversal of local control.

I am also concerned about the chilling effect this would have. Who gets to decide what is obscene? I fear that it would quickly become a politicized metric that would censor ideas and identities, targeting topics that get at the very heart of what the First Amendment enshrines.

I also urge you to vote against LD 1008, which would have an unnamed state agency impose one-size-fits all ratings on books. Rating books requires that some individual or group make a value-judgment about the content of the books with the assumption that that judgment is valid for any and all users of the book. Why should the opinion of state

bureaucrats have more value than community-based educators and parents? We already make careful, deliberate, and nuanced choices based on community standards about what books we purchase.

A rating system would supersede the rights of parents who currently have ways to control what their own children read through local policies, but should never have the ability to unilaterally control what other children read. A democratic process exists for parents who object to materials in their school library. This legislation is an attempt to override that fair and measured process to impose individual preferences on entire communities.

Finally, I urge you to vote against LD 618. This bill proposes to censor three very different groups of ideas and practices, none of which are harmful to children. In fact, Social Emotional Learning is a set of skills that help our children learn how to behave appropriately and become productive members of society. It is not new, it is just the name given to the same things we have always taught beginning in preschool. Critical Race Theory just isn't taught in K12 schools and even if it were, parents already have an avenue, through their local IMB policy, to exempt their child from instruction they disapprove of. Finally, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are not a curriculum or subject, but the very ideals expressed in our country's Declaration of Independence.

I oppose all three of these bills because they are designed to restrict what libraries and schools can offer to their students. Libraries, books, and education are not a threat to our children! There certainly are many other threats to them that you could be legislating against; but libraries, books, and education are not putting our children at risk.



Heather Perkinson, M.L.I.S., M.Ed., MASL President
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