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LD 1395

Dear Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,
Please vote ought not to pass on LD 1395.

I am writing to express my opposition to LD 1395, specifically the part of the legislation discussing library databases. While I understand the importance of protecting minors from harmful content, this bill introduces unnecessary restrictions and creates contradictions that ultimately undermine the educational value and the integrity of school library resources.

To be clear, I believe students should be educated about the dangers of sexual abuse, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation as part of a well-rounded digital citizenship and health curriculum that relies on vetted, high-quality sources like the ones available in library databases.

Existing Laws Already Protect Minors from Harmful Content and School Library Databases Are Already Safeguarded

Federal and state laws already protect minors from harmful and obscene materials. In addition, any school district receiving e-rate funding has an extra layer of filtering to comply with Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) regulation. There is no evidence to suggest library databases pose a risk to students, and further restrictions could limit access to valuable educational resources. Given these existing protections and the nature of content in library databases, additional legislation is unnecessary.

Disconnect Between the Bill's Two Provisions

The bill's two key provisions—the restriction on certain materials and the promotion of instructional modules on human trafficking and sexual exploitation—appear contradictory. On the one hand, the bill mandates that the prevention of human trafficking, sexual abuse, and exploitation be taught in schools. On the other hand, the bill opens up the possibility of restricting access to valuable resources that offer valid, reliable information on these topics. If we are to properly educate students about recognizing the signs of abuse and trafficking, it is essential that they have access to accurate, comprehensive information. Restricting access to well-curated library databases undermines that goal.

Risks of Censorship and Limiting Educational Autonomy

This bill threatens to introduce censorship into public school curricula by restricting access to educational content based on personal or political beliefs. While I respect the rights of parents to make decisions about their children's education, those decisions should not dictate what resources are available to all students. These resources are not harmful; rather, they are crucial for healthy development and a well-rounded education. Bills like this could lead to a chilling effect, where educators are hesitant to include materials simply because they may be controversial or uncomfortable to some individuals.

Parental Rights and Government Overreach

Parental involvement in their children's education is vital, and parents should have the ability to guide their children's learning experiences. While some parents may wish to limit their child's exposure to certain topics, others may feel that such topics are essential for their child's development and understanding of the world. We cannot allow one family's beliefs to limit access to information for another's.

Conclusion

I respectfully urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1395 due to its overreach, redundancy, and potential for censorship. The existing legal framework already provides robust protections for students from harmful content and further restrictions on educational resources are unnecessary and counterproductive. It is essential that we trust educators, librarians, and parents to ensure that students have access to the appropriate materials for their education without introducing unnecessary barriers that may limit their learning opportunities.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I hope that you will carefully review the implications of this bill and recognize the importance of maintaining a broad and

inclusive educational environment.