



TOM GAULD

Several legislative bills in this session of the Georgia General Assembly threaten students' access to information and stories to enrich their intellectual and personal growth. With significant deficits currently well-documented in both literacy and strong mental health, limiting students' choices seems counter to other efforts to improve reading fluency and psychological wellness. Bills which would negatively impact the ability of certified librarians to provide the range of age-relevant materials from which our students (with input from *their own families*) may choose are:

[SB 390](#) - contends "present state requirement that only certified librarians may work as librarians (directors) at public libraries has not benefited the residents of this state." Prohibits use of public or donated funds on "any materials, services, or operations offered by the American Library Association or any of its affiliates." The precedent of government restriction of business of professional organizations, particularly on doctrinal basis, is disturbing. Over 60 studies have documented the [positive impact of certified school librarians](#) on student achievement; learning losses occurred when certified librarian positions were eliminated.*

[SB 394](#) - redefines "harmful to minors" to include subjective "sexually explicit" materials. Extensive requirements for Georgia DOE, Georgia Public Library System, and local districts for designation and posting of materials restricted through 6th grade with exceptions for AP/IB/DE and "materials of great religious or historical significance." Invites abuse of complaint process with embargo of materials during reconsideration, counter to long-standing best practice of continued access until final decision. Texas law with similar requirements regarding rating of materials was [overturned by Federal Court](#) with the decision unanimously supported on appeal. The Library Media and Resource Specialist position at Georgia DOE has been unfilled for six months; much of this bill calls for this expertise.

[SB 154](#) - "Jail the Librarians" - civil and criminal prosecution for distribution of materials "harmful to minors" from school libraries. Intimidation of school librarians with extension of "harmful to minors" definition in SB 394 with year-in-jail and monetary fines threats.

[SB 365](#) - Parent email notification of students' library checkouts; expands harmful to minors policy to classroom and extracurricular materials. Students are likely to ask friend to check out for them or just "forget" to visit the circulation desk or sign out from classroom library.

* Pattern of targeting educational professionals' credentials and practice with [SB 379](#) School Chaplains Act - "A school chaplain employed or accepted as a volunteer [to serve in school counselor role] is not required to be a certificated professional personnel."