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ALA American Library Association

The American Library Association fully supports the right of every parent to control what their student reads and to select alternative reading or instructional materials for their student. We encourage parents and children to talk together about the materials that they are reading. We do not believe, however, that a parent's right to control their child's reading includes a right to restrict what other children read or limit the curricular materials available to other students.

Books and materials purchased for use by children and adolescents in classrooms and libraries are selected by educators, librarians, and administrators trained in child development and pedagogy using standards outlined in written policies approved by school and library boards. Those materials are then purchased from mainstream publishers and suppliers whose business relies on a reputation for educational suitability and literary value. Claims that these materials are obscene or harmful to minors because the materials present accurate medical information, depict human anatomy, contain content addressing LGBTQ issues, or include a single excerpt describing sexual behavior are false and unsupported by law, which narrowly construes what is deemed obscene and excludes materials that a reasonable person would view as having serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for a reasonable 17-year-old minor.

Librarians and library staff take their responsibilities to their communities seriously. They are dedicated to developing collections and resources for young persons with "mirrors, windows, and doors," that allow a child to see themselves and their families reflected in the library's materials and provide a means to understand themselves and the world around them. Although there is a natural desire to shield children and adolescents from the world's more difficult realities, limiting access to books does not protect young people from the complex and challenging world that confronts them.

Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., President
American Library Association
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