

Comment Report

SF 2198

A bill for an act relating to the prohibition of certain specified materials in schools and school libraries and providing penalties.(See SF 2364.)

Subcommittee Members: Zaun-CH, Petersen, Schultz

Date: 02/10/2022

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Room 24

Name: Sandy Wilson

Comment: Citizen Engagement declares IN FAVOR of SF 2198.

Name: Andrea Welch

Comment: Censoring books will not help improve the quality of education. Students have access to far more dangerous information online, which they are exploring independently and without context or support. Productive discourse of text with a trained professional in order to gain knowledge is a far safer option for students. If parents are concerned about texts used in schools, they should contact teachers directly.

Name: Beth Nelson

Comment: I have students check out the Bible from the library on a regular basis. You're going to fine me for this? Proverbs 5:19, Ezekiel 23: 1821, Genesis 19:35, etc. I could give you MANY more examples of obscene text from the Bible. Should we set up a direct deposit for all these fines? Or will you just ban the Bible from my library? I'd like an answer, please. Or simply stop the charade that teachers have some sinister agenda and drop this bill.

Name: Nathaniel Chesher

Comment: This bill is outright censorship. Parents are always welcome to parent/censor their own children's potential learning. However, not all families are the same. Other families have a level of maturity so their children can learn from different points of view rather than be horrified that 'others' exist. The fining only exists in this bill to serve as proxy to parents too lazy to actually parent their own children.

Name: Mary Hayward

Comment: This is a futile effort. To Kill a Mockingbird has become a Broadway sensation. Other banned books are impossible to find on the shelves, because of their popularity. We must trust the judgment of our professional librarians and teachers to know what is appropriate for which children. Stop wasting time.Thank you.

Name: Joan Bessman Taylor

Comment: Current law that already exists:
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/ico/chapter/728.pdf>Makes it illegal to provide pornography to minorsSF2198 is redundant of the current lawBy restating existing law it makes the Code needlessly cumbersome and regressiveThe goal of this bill is unclear and can only be seen as attacking a straw man It is not the case now, nor has it ever been the case that teachers and librarians intentionally provided materials in school that meet the threshold of obscenity that is, works when taken as a whole lack any literary merit and exist with the sole goal of appealing to prurient interests. There are already laws in place that deal with providing policies for selection and the reconsideration of materials. We are guided by Iowa Code 280.12. Policies that

guide decision making around retaining or removing materials are already required and get revisited through regular procedures the process of library inventory and collection audits to ensure that collections are responsive to everchanging societal expectations. Iowa code requires a properly endorsed teacher librarian in every district. They are your insurance that the materials made available in classrooms and libraries are appropriate for the identified audience and that obscenity does not find its way in. I would submit that your assumed goals for putting forward this bill protecting our young people from materials unsuitable for them could be more immediately met by ensuring that the already existent Code requiring a fully endorsed librarian in every district be upheld. If change is needed then perhaps the change should be to require a professional librarian not just in every district but in every school so that full attention can be paid to the provision of materials rather than leaving such supervision to untrained staff or worse allowing for the neglect of it altogether. Rather than creating redundant legislation please direct your efforts toward seeing that the safeguards already required by law be fully realized.

Name: Nikki Paradise-Williams

Comment: This bill is unnecessary. Show teachers and librarians that Iowa respects their professional judgment.

Name: Chelsea Sims

Comment: This bill is not only unnecessary (as there are already laws in place that prevent obscenity in schools), it is also antidemocratic. The constitution protects our intellectual freedom, and this bill attempts to limit that right. No to censorship. No to moral panic dictating our laws.

Name: Jill Hofmockel

Comment: I am against this bill. The law is unnecessary as there are already pornography laws on the books. And schools already have reconsideration processes in place.

Name: Michelle Veach

Comment: I am writing in support of this bill. Any book that contains profanity, or sexual content should NOT be in our public schools They must NOT be assigned as required reading. I have read aloud at JSD school board meetings from required reading at Johnston High School 9/10th grade class: Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Foer includes text such as "Blow job" "dick" "Penis" "Cunt" "whore". Adults are shocked that I would SAY these words. I am shocked our kids would READ these words. Please set a moral standard in our public, tax funded schools. No profanity. No sex. If kids want to read that they can go the public library, or buy the books privately. Without penalties schools will not comply with any law you pass. Failed reconsideration processes at the school level prove this. Parents have tried to fix this on our own we need a law to enforce moral standards.

Name: Lisa Petrie

Comment: Perhaps you've not spent a lot of time in libraries, or with librarians, but I promise you this; you'd be hardpressed to find a group of professionals LESS intimidated by threats to penalize them for protecting our students' right to read. I won't even waste my time trying to convince you that school library professionals would *never* intentionally purchase "hard core pornography" or "obscene" material. What I AM here to say is this: Stop bullying our kids. It's clear that your goal is less about throwing librarians in jail, then it is to lay down a very strict definition of what it means to be human. It is clear that you don't identify with our LGBTQ+ students, or with Black and brown kids whose lived experience is very different from yours. Ibram X. Kendi says it best: "Imagine a bill barring your school from discussing you, a bill seeking to make an aspect of you invisible when you're struggling to see and be your full self, and learn your full self in your world. These bills of bigotry are toxic to developing children." Please stop. You are harming our kids.

Name: Jonathan Sims

Comment: This law is unnecessary. Pornography laws already exist. Schools already have solid methods for selecting materials for their libraries and for people to challenge those materials without throwing people in jail. Stop trying to censor books. Stop painting educators as villains.

Name: Claire Matthews

Comment: Teachers support what students ask for. There is not an agenda, other than encouraging critical thinking about all information that students are consuming. There is far more damaging information in the comments of an innocent Youtube video than there is in a book that explores difficult issues, and asks the reader to think about different points of view. Punishing teachers for encouraging students to think about the books and information they read is a waste of time.

Name: Jackie Biger

Comment: Writing not in support. Teachers and Librarians are trained to professionally select materials for school and libraries that align with curriculum and needs of students. Books are crafted and created and exist in a confined space and time and story or informational need. This bill seems designed to create a space for people to try and punish teachers based upon their own individual comforts. There are already reconsideration policies in place at school districts. The internet is not nearly as controlled as a book. Erasing the informational or literary experiences for a student does not erase that student's existence and their own experiences.

Name: Tara Helwig

Comment: I am In support of this bill because it was brought to my attention this year after choosing to live in Johnston, that our kids are being asked and sometimes required to read filthy literature. The books we tried to get taken off the list for required reading, not banned just not required was shot down by the committee the superintendent appointed. These particular books poke in detail about a kid and his pride in masterbating. The other used the F word and racial slurs, and much hate speech for cops and other public servants. The f word used just under 100 times. How is this appropriate? Some community members were offended when one mother stood up and read the words straight from the book. As adults I find this not only offensive but raciest and not acceptable. Please put an end to the abuse of our children by teachers and administration who support this filth. We should have higher standards as a school and we need support to protect our children from this abuse. Thank you

Name: Melissa Collins

Comment: I support this bill. Movies have ratings for a reason. Schools won't show rated R movies to students at school. The same should go for the books in the library. If public libraries want to have the material, then fine, but school libraries is not the place for sexualized material.

Name: Susan Corbin-Muir

Comment: I am against this bill. The law is unnecessary as there are already pornography laws on the books. And schools already have reconsideration processes in place. Trust and respect the professionals and our students!

Name: Sam Blatt

Comment: This bill is unnecessary and repugnant. Intellectual freedoms are key and this will hinder that right. Jailing educators, for doing their job and providing a variety of resources is despicable.

Name: Janet Smith

Comment: The world that our high school students are getting ready to enter is complex and

diverse. Young adults need and deserve an increasing measure of control over their learning and their lives. Shielding them from the realities of different ways of thinking and living limits them from participating fully. Compassion, empathy, kindness these qualities are developed by accessing stories of characters who are different from them. Parents, read with your children. Talk to them about the stories, the history, your values. Don't teach them to turn away from difference teach them to understand that there are many ways to live in this world. What are you afraid of?

Name: Katherine Bryden

Comment: Opposed to SF2198 as it is unnecessary, and frankly an insult to the training and skill set of our teachers and librarians. They are educated to select appropriate materials for kids at every developmental stage. They are not criminals. They protect and serve our children, and they are a bulwark against narrow minded, censorial tendencies that are ascendant in our culture right now. I want my children to maintain intellectual curiosity and not have their access to information limited by people who have an extremist religious agenda and are set on siphoning my tax dollars away from secular public education to private Christian schools.

Name: Jason Arnold

Comment: I'm opposed to bill SF2198 as there are already safeguards in place for this in Iowa law. Students are never required to read any book by teachers. Parents are the ones dropping the ball here. If a parent objects to material being presented in class they have the ability and right to ask for an alternative book. Parents are the ones dropping the ball by not engaging with teachers and administration. New laws are not going to fix that and this law is redundant with already existing law and adds cumbersome work to an already stretched thin educational system.

Name: Shawn Brauer

Comment: As a teacher/librarian in an elementary school this bill repulses me. Why do a few people get to decide what is appropriate and what is not? All of our books are listed online so parents, community members, or whom ever else wants to see what is available they are able and welcome to. If a child checks out a book that a parent deems to be offensive then they need to have the chat with their child explaining why it is not appropriate. To fine a teacher or a librarian for having a book that one person finds unacceptable is not a way to keep Iowa in the top of education field and it is not a way to keep teachers that are highly qualified as teachers.

Name: Michelle Hartwig

Comment: I am absolutely horrified by this bill. I can't believe you are even considering punishing teachers and therefore students by allowing uneducated, uninformed opinions dictate what is and is not okay in our public school classrooms. Please, for the love of God, let educators make the decisions. Individual parents can opt their kids out of segments of instruction if it hurts their feelings or they are worried that knowing the truth about of American will lead them to be unpatriotic rather than agent of change to fix the things that are admittedly wrong and shameful in our history. Public schools should not cater to a political view points but should continue to teach the truth.

Name: Denise Perez

Comment: Writing in AGAINST this bill. Who determines what is pornographic. The Bible contains nmeros pornagraphic & violent stories. Please let ou librarians and teachers do their jobs.

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Name: Samantha Helmick

Comment: I hold several concerns about this Senate File including: * Consequences of prosecution and some of the more vague definitions will be detrimental to schools and libraries and to the access to the wide array of information accessible to Iowa communities. We should want to champion unhindered access to data, content, information, and philosophy as much as possible to develop well rounded, critically thinking Iowans. * This government overreach conflicts with the foundational principle that congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech. As a voting Republican, I am dismayed by the attempts to increase government control at the State level rather than entrusting local, smaller government (City Councils, County Commissions, and School Boards) to lead their communities forward. I no longer feel that I can vote a straight line ticket due to this and similar proposals. I am talking to my conservative communities, friends, and family members who also agree this does not represent us, our values, or our love of liberty/autonomy. * Caregivers and parents should be trusted to make decisions for their children but not for the others or their children or broader communities. My parents involved themselves in my life (particularly my education) and that is a fair standard to hold to all Iowans. Be present. Be an advocate for your children. Be a parent that teaches your children to navigate the real world and all its difficulties and beauties. Be a parent that raises strong thinkers for Iowa. * This file is a roadblock to information access and intellectual freedom. Silencing the voices, experiences, and perspectives outside of our immediate own/ the majority is a detriment to homogeneity, society, and democracy. Without access to ideas outside my own, I cannot grow or adapt. I cannot build strongly principled arguments against the conversations that do not share my values if I can find them in my library. More information and transparency is required never less.

Name: Anne Coatar

Comment: I am against this bill. I am a parent and a teacher librarian. Fully trained professional librarians already follow a protocol for selecting ageappropriate materials as laid out by the school district. Librarians work with teachers, and administrators when selecting appropriate materials and curricula for students. The legislature should focus on making sure each school has a fully trained librarian selecting materials for students. Furthermore, this law attempts to violate intellectual freedom which is protected by the constitution.

Name: Paula Thome

Comment: I am adamantly opposed to SF 2198. There is no common sense in this bill at all. It just leads to more threats made toward teachers which will only increase the teacher shortage even more. Schools have existing working review processes. Parents are more than welcome to come into classrooms. This bill again is a waste of time and unbelievable that it is even being debated.

Name: Jenahlee Chamberlain

Comment: I am opposition of this legislation. It is not only unnecessary due to laws that are already exist and protect students, but it also an insult to highly trained teachers and librarians in a state that is said to value education. Policies already exist when it comes to selection and reconsideration of materials used in schools. Parents and teachers should educate themselves on these processes before villainizing teachers and librarians.

Name: Michelle Morey

Comment: Libraries exist to serve all, not a minority of the conservativeminded. Different people have different life experiences and interestsit's as simple as that. The fact that one person may find something offensive in a book does not mean that others will. It seems that some are offended that other people and experiences exist at all. It is truly disturbing to see the disproportionate number of materials related to LGBTQ topics

and people of color that these legislators would like to see erased. In Texas they have moved to ban a book on Ruby Bridges. A "sinister agenda" indeed!

Name: Tiffany DeBow

Comment: This law is redundant. The definition of obscene material per 728.1 is pornography. It is already illegal for any adult to provide porn to children. It doesn't matter where they work. This is political grandstanding & intimidation to try to scare schools & staff into doing what the government cannot legally make them do, pull books off the shelves that having any reference to sexuality or body parts someone might object to regardless of the content. The GOP is getting really good at bully laws to get done what they want to do, but legally cannot.

Name: Sara Anderson

Comment: As parents, we all understand the importance to protect our children from exposure to pornography in the home and the dangers this destructive path leads to. Please protect our children no different than we do in our homes, from pornographic material while they are in school. Pornography is a major problem woven everywhere into society today and our children need leaders everywhere in the home, in schools and within legislation, to help protect them from acceptance and tolerance to pornography in certain environments or circumstances such as schools. Exposing kids to Pornography in any situation or environment is wrong period. Please protect our children.