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## **Free Speech Groups Criticize WA Daycare Program Limiting Use of ‘Frightening’ Books**

Washington, Nov 22-The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is calling on a Washington State daycare subsidy program to revise a requirement that considers books with “frightening images” inappropriate for children.

The Washington State Department of Early Learning's Early Achievers program provides select daycares with state sponsored subsidies. To qualify for a subsidy, daycares must earn a certain rating from the state. The rating scheme works on a points-based system that relies on a daycare satisfying a series of requirements in the program’s “Training Quality Standards.” Indicator 5.4 of the standard states “books that glorify violence in any way or show frightening images are not considered to be appropriate” for children.

NCAC expresses concern that the stipulation is overbroad, potentially excluding pedagogically valuable materials from daycare provider’s selection options. Fairy tales like *Little Red Riding Hood* could, for example, be prohibited. Providers might also be forced to consider non-fiction books about dinosaurs, natural disasters or large animals as in breach of the regulation. What a child considers frightening is subjective, NCAC’s letter continues. The “frightening image” standard may thus prevent daycare providers from tailoring a reading curriculum appropriate for each child. Classics like *Where the Wild Things Are* and *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed* may be frightening, and perhaps inappropriate, to some children, but certainly not to all.

The letter is co-signed by the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, National Council of Teachers of English, American Booksellers for Free Expression, Washington Library Association, Association of American Publishers, Authors Guild and PEN America.

“NCAC is concerned the requirement prevents daycare providers from exercising their literary expertise and pedagogical insight to the fullest,” said NCAC’s Josh Zuckerman. “Indicator 5.4 forgets that reading frightening books can be beneficial for young children, helping them overcome their fears and providing lessons about dangerous situations.”

[READ THE FULL LETTER](#)

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*The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is an alliance of 50 national non-profit organizations dedicated to defending freedom of thought, inquiry and expression.*