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Free Speech Groups Defend *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* Against Label of ‘Obscenity’

Dubuque, IA, Nov 29 2016- The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is again defending Stephen Chobsky’s young adult novel, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, after Iowa parents labeled it “obscene” and pushed for its removal from local classrooms.

Earlier this month, Jodi Lockwood, a parent of a child at Hempstead High School in Dubuque Iowa, brought an official reconsideration request for the inclusion of *Perks* in the Dubuque schools’ curriculum after discovering the book contained “graphic scenes” involving sexual and drug abuse. A review panel was then convened to discuss the reconsideration request. At the initial meeting parents expressed concern that the book may be harmful for young readers, potentially triggering trauma in students who had undergone relatable experiences. Others suggested parents should be notified whenever controversial material is taught. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is frequently listed on the American Library Associations [yearly list of the ten most frequently challenged books](#). Common reasons include concerns about bad language and sexually explicit passages.

NCAC’s letter to the review committee argues that the mere presence of “graphic” scenes is no ground for deeming a book inappropriate. Using this reasoning, the letter notes, great works of literature, like many of Shakespeare’s plays, could also be excluded from school curriculums. NCAC recommends the committee rule in favor of keeping the book, underlining the precedent a removal would set for future book challenges and the inevitable toll this will take on Dubuque student’s education. The letter is co-signed by the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, the National Council of Teachers of English, American Booksellers for Free Expression, Association of American Publishers, Authors Guild, American Society of Journalists and Authors and PEN America.

“The Perks of Being a Wallflower explores many themes that are of significance to teenage lives,” said NCAC’s Youth Free Expression Program Associate Josh Zuckerman. “Parents may understandably find them concerning, but limiting access to the book prevents opportunities for meaningful discussions on these difficult topics, and potentially ways for young people to grapple and overcome problems they are be dealing with.”

[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.