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In response to recent efforts by lawmakers and special interest groups to suppress Pride events in Ohio libraries, the National Coalition Against Censorship, Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, PEN America, National Council for Teachers of English and ACLU of Ohio issued the following statement:

House Speaker Larry Householder's [letter](#) pressuring the Ohio Library Council to cancel youth events in celebration of Pride month is an assault on free speech principles and an abuse of political power.

While he claims to be a 'believer in the First Amendment' and recognizes libraries as "incubator(s) for thought and ideas...for debate and discussion", Speaker Householder's implicit threat to penalize libraries financially in retaliation for LGBTQ expression is a clear attempt to silence voices he personally disagrees with. To Speaker Householder, this may not appear to be a First Amendment issue but defunding expression because of its viewpoint is a highly effective means of suppressing opinion. The government can choose whether to fund culture and libraries, but it cannot then use the purse strings to suppress disfavored viewpoints. Indeed, U.S. courts have firmly opposed governmental efforts to suppress expression by selectively denying funding. [Brooklyn Institute of Arts v. City of New York](#), 64 F. Supp. 2d 184 (E.D.N.Y. 1999)

Two Ohio libraries cancelled events about diversity, tolerance and drag culture subsequent to Speaker Householder's letter, partly in response to protests from right-wing religious groups, as well as violent threats. Speaker Householder's actions feed into this culture of intolerance that increasingly disregards First Amendment principles.

We commend the Ohio Library Council for their steadfast commitment to free expression in the face of political pressure. Libraries serve their communities best by providing open forums to exchange *diverse* views not just those that lawmakers – or taxpayers – consider 'right'.

For LGBTQ youth, particularly those in unsupportive school or home environments, the library can be a special haven to explore their identities and develop the self-esteem along with the cultural awareness they'll need to safely navigate the world.

NCAC's [Uncensored Pride](#) campaign supports libraries and school communities with resources and guidance to ensure no child is stigmatized or silenced.