

**NATIONAL
COALITION
AGAINST
CENSORSHIP** **KIDS'
RIGHT
TO READ**

March 30, 2021

Board of Trustees
Eanes Independent School District
601 Camp Craft Road
Austin TX 78746

Re: Removal of *Call Me Max*

Dear Board members:

The National Coalition Against Censorship and the other groups signed below are dedicated to protecting the freedom to read, the First Amendment, and high quality public education. We are writing about the banning of *Call Me Max*, a book which has been described by the *School Library Journal* as “an excellent, and potentially groundbreaking, publication choice.” The singling out of this one book from the list and banning it for the viewpoint it expresses, raises serious constitutional concerns.

It is our understanding that *Call Me Max* was one of a number of books on a list of suggested readings which was circulated by one of your teachers, and that teachers were instructed not to use the book after some parents objected on the ground that the book deals with transgender issues.

We acknowledge that the District is well within its rights to prevent teachers from using instructional resources which have not been adopted through the district’s curriculum review process. However, had that been the District’s sole motivation, it presumably would have told teachers to cease using all of the books on the list. Instead, it singled out *Call Me Max*. In so doing, the District created a perception that it was discriminating against the viewpoint expressed in the book, i.e., that transgender expression should be acceptable, just as cisgender expression is acceptable. Since the District assigns many books in which cisgendered individuals are presented, the removal of *Call Me Max* suggests that the District has engaged in censorship, which violates the First Amendment.

If the District is concerned about the pedagogical value of books on a supplementary book list it should have a procedure for reviewing the entire list, not arbitrarily single out one book with a possibly controversial viewpoint. However, it is our recommendation that teachers, who are the professionals most familiar with their students’ needs, should have the discretion to use their professional judgment to choose the books they offer their students.

Finally, news reports indicate that some parents have demanded that a teacher who read the book in class be terminated. We call upon the District to publicly state that the teacher did not commit a terminable offense, nor any offense at all, and will not be disciplined for his or her good faith effort to comply with the District's stated devotion to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely yours,



Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
 American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom
 The Authors Guild
 Freedom to Read Foundation
 National Council of Teachers of English
 PEN America
 PEN America Children's and Young Adult Books Committee
 Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

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