

October 14, 2021

Board of Education
Hudson City School District
2400 Hudson Aurora Road
Hudson, OH 44236

Re: Removal of *Lawn Boy*

Dear Board members:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is a coalition of literary, artistic and educational organizations dedicated to promoting free expression. We are writing in regard to news reports indicating that Jonathan Evison's book, *Lawn Boy*, was removed from school libraries after some community members objected to some of its content. *Lawn Boy* won the American Library Association's Alex Award in 2019 as one of the top ten books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults, ages 12 through 18.

The Supreme Court has established that public school officials' discretion regarding the removal of library books is particularly limited to ensure the protection of students' First Amendment right to access information because "students must always remain free to inquire, to study, and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding" and "the school library is the principal locus of such freedom." *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 868-69 (1982).

In the same case, the Court also cautioned, "[l]ocal school boards may not remove books from library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books and seek by their removal to 'prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.'" *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 872 (1982). Thus, the removal of books from public school libraries to suppress ideas is a violation of the First Amendment.

It appears that, in the case of *Lawn Boy*, the district has ignored its own review policies. It is our understanding that the book was removed pending a review of its content. Yet, the District's Administrative Guideline 2510A provides that the Superintendent may not remove a challenged book until a review committee has been convened and has issued a recommendation.

Removing a book without following administrative regulations is not only illegal, it also raises serious pedagogical concerns. It greatly burdens teachers, and is likely to chill their ability to select books that they believe best serve students' needs.

While not every book is right for every young reader, the role of school libraries is to allow students and parents to make choices according to their own interests, experiences, and family values. However, no parent, student or community member may impose their views, values and interests on others by restricting an entire community's access to particular books.

Therefore, we ask that the District return *Lawn Boy* to the library pending the outcome of the challenge to the book, and to clarify to all teachers, administrators and staff that administrative regulations must be followed when challenges are brought to learning materials.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely yours,



Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: The Authors Guild
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
National Council of Teachers of English
PEN America Children's and Young Adult Books Committee
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

CC: Phillip Herman, Superintendent

A project of the National
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