

**NATIONAL
COALITION
AGAINST
CENSORSHIP**

**KIDS'
RIGHT
TO READ**

January 7, 2022

County Commissioners
Llano County Commissioners' Court
Llano County Courthouse
801 Ford Street
Llano, Texas 78643

Re: Book removal at Llano County Library

Dear Commissioners:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression. We are writing in regard to the recent removal of two books from the Llano County library: the award-winning health education book, *It's Perfectly Normal*, by Robie Harris; and *In The Night Kitchen*, by Maurice Sendak.

It is our understanding that the library did not follow its book challenge procedures before removing those books. Instead, it has been reported that a librarian removed these books under pressure from local politicians. It is highly problematic for book removal decisions to be made by a single person. This action increases the likelihood that a book will be removed for improper reasons, such as personal hostility to the perceived message of the book. Moreover, libraries have a public mission to serve all of its community, and of course, every library book may not appeal to all readers. When book removal decisions are made by a properly constituted committee, it is more likely that all patrons' needs will be incorporated into the library's collection. It is less likely that decisions will be the result of political pressure or other improper considerations.

Both of the books in question have been in publication for decades, and are in the collections of libraries across the country. Both were presumably selected for inclusion in the library's collection pursuant to library policy, which states, "Materials with an emphasis on sex, or containing profane language should not be automatically rejected. Selection should be made on the basis of whether the media presents life in its true proportions, whether characters and situations are realistically presented, and whether the media has literary value."

Moreover, the library policy states that "responsibility for the use of materials by children and adolescents shall rest with their parents or legal guardians. While a person may reject materials for himself or herself and for his or her children, he or she shall not exercise censorship to restrict access to the materials by others." Had the library submitted the books to a committee,

the reviewers might have decided that, notwithstanding certain brief sections that may be controversial when taken out of context, the needs of its users are best served by retaining *the books* on library shelves.

Therefore, we urge the County to return *It's Perfectly Normal* and *In The Night Kitchen* to the shelves until it has conducted a formal review of those books. We encourage you to ensure that the County's book challenge regulations are followed in the future.

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
PEN America
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

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