

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

March 22, 2022

Board of Education
Wicomico County Public Schools
2424 Northgate Drive Suite 100,
Salisbury, MD 21801

Re: Removal of *All Boys Aren't Blue* from district libraries

Dear Board members:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers and staff. We are writing in regard to reports that the District has removed George M. Johnson's *All Boys Aren't Blue* from district libraries without following the district's book challenge procedures. We call upon the district to return the book to district libraries pending adjudication of the challenge pursuant to district regulations.

According to correspondence from Supt. Hanlin, two media specialists chose to remove the book of their own accord, because "they did not recognize the extremely graphic nature of this book when it was ordered. They corrected their own mistake, meaning that it didn't need to go through the review process." Supt. Hanlin also stated that she supports that decision.

It is obviously highly problematic for district employees to decide when and if they must comply with district policies, regardless of their good intentions. It is particularly problematic for them to ignore book challenge procedures, because doing so exposes the district to potential legal liability. The Supreme Court has limited the ability of public schools to remove library books. In particular, the Court has said that books cannot be removed because of disagreement with the views expressed therein. Well-crafted book challenge regulations ensure that those illicit concerns do not infect the adjudication process. When a district ignores those regulations, it creates suspicion that it has acted improperly.

In order to allay those suspicions, we urge the district to return the book to library shelves, initiate a formal review of the book, and make it clear to all district personnel that compliance with board regulations is not optional.

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
 National Council of Teachers of English
 Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

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