

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

April 18, 2022

School Board of Palm Beach County
Fulton-Holland Educational Services Center
3300 Forest Hill Boulevard
West Palm Beach, FL33406

Re: Removal of *Call Me Max* and *I am Jazz*

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 response to media reports that the district has removed Kyle Lukoff's *Call Me Max* and Jazz Jennings's *I am Jazz* from classrooms and libraries, purportedly in compliance with Florida House Bill 1557, which was recently signed into law. We urge the district to immediately return both books to district libraries.

H.B. 1557 states that "[c]lassroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards."

However, the law applies only to classroom instruction and says nothing about school library materials. Therefore, there is no statutory authority for removing the two books from district libraries.

This does not mean that library books may not be challenged when a community member or employee has a concern about the appropriateness of library materials. But all challenges must be processed according to Board Policy 8.1205, which requires that all stakeholders feel heard, and that all participants believe that the process is fair, open, and comprehensive.

For example, the policy provides that a diverse committee of education professionals and community members must review each challenged work; and that the review committee consider a long list of specific criteria when determining whether to retain or remove the work. Following those procedures will help ensure that the district will be seen as an honest broker when these highly contentious issues are raised in your community.

Therefore, we call on you to immediately return *Call Me Max* and *I am Jazz* to the shelves of the district's libraries.

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
The Authors Guild
The National Council of Teachers of English
PEN America
PEN Children's and Young Adult Books Committee

A project of the National
Coalition Against Censorship

CO-SPONSORED BY

American Booksellers for Free
Expression
Comic Book Legal Defense
Fund
National Council of Teachers of
English

NCAC.ORG