

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

October 13, 2022

School Board
The School District of Escambia County, Florida
75 North Pace Blvd
Pensacola, Florida 32505

Dear Members of the School Board,

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 the District's recent restriction of over a hundred books from school libraries in violation of District regulations. We urge you to return the books to shelves pending adjudication as is required by those regulations.

As we understand it, after a teacher complained, Superintendent Smith mandated that these books could only be accessed with parental permission. That action violated the District's book challenge policies which state that "[a]ccess to challenged resources shall not be restricted during the review process."

This incident illustrates the wisdom of the District's requirement that access to books remains unrestricted during the reconsideration process. Ignoring this policy may encourage others to file large-scale meritless challenges for the sole purpose of limiting students' access to ideas they dislike. In addition to harming students, such challenges will put enormous strain on the District which will be required to spend countless hours adjudicating baseless claims.

Therefore, we urge the Board to return the challenged books to library shelves and to ensure that its challenge procedures are followed in this case and in all future cases.

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
Children's and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America
National Council of Teachers of English
PEN America

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