

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

November 3, 2022

Board of Education
Beaufort County School District
2900 Mink Point Boulevard
Beaufort, SC 29902

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

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 decision to remove over 90 books from school libraries before they have been officially challenged. We urge you to return the books to library shelves until such time as a complaint has been filed that meets the requirements of your current policy. In addition, we ask you to reconsider a provision of your policy that allows for the removal of challenged books while they are being reviewed.

According to media reports, the District has initiated the reconsideration process prior to receiving a formal request as required by district policy. As you know, the policy "require[s] complainants to submit complete, substantive, and fully researched challenge requests" (Regulation IS - 38.1). To comply with the policy in this case, the district must require a complaint that provides detailed information about all challenged titles. Otherwise, it may set a dangerous precedent that district employees can ignore policies whenever they think it is convenient to do so. Therefore, we urge you to return the books until formal reconsideration requests are filed.

In addition, we encourage the District to eliminate the current provision that states, "The material in question will be removed from general use throughout the BCSD during the reconsideration process." In our experience, it is in the best interests of the District and its students to ensure that books are not removed from library shelves during the recommendation process. In fact, many districts' policies include an explicit requirement that access to books remain unrestricted during the reconsideration process. For example, Savannah-Chatham Public Schools' policy, says that during the reconsideration process "Materials under consideration will remain in use until a decision has been rendered (Regulation IFBD-R).

A policy that keeps books in the library discourages complainants from filing large-scale meritless challenges for the sole purpose of limiting students' access to ideas they dislike. Therefore, modifying your policy will help the District achieve its goal to "conserve limited staff resources, discourage the monopolization of the challenge process by a few individuals" (Regulation IS - 38.1).

For these reasons, we recommend that you amend your policy. Finally, we are attaching a copy of our Guidelines for Administrators, which includes sample book challenge procedures from school districts across the country.

Please contact us if we can be helpful.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Finan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
The Authors Guild
National Council of Teachers of English

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