

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

February 15, 2023

Board of Education
Madison County Public Schools
60 School Board Court
Madison, VA 22727

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 regards to recent changes in district policy which require books that include "explicit sexual content" be removed even if they have substantial educational value for students. It's our understanding that this policy has already led to the removal of over 20 books from school libraries.

We believe this is a misguided policy. Among the books removed, are works by Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison, and award winning books such as *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. While these books may have isolated passages of sexual content, they may nevertheless be extremely valuable for students. Rather than imposing a blanket ban on these books, the district should trust their professional educators to review the books and determine whether their value to students outweighs concerns about sexual content.

We understand issues around what materials should be available to students are often emotionally charged. As a result, it is important that districts make decisions about library collections in a manner which ensures that all parties, including educational professionals, students, parents and other members of the school community, feel that their views have been considered and that decisions about educational material are made in an objective, nonpolitical manner. NCAC has created a resource to help school officials address the problem of book challenges, *Material Review and Policy Guidelines and Examples*. It is attached.

We urge you to amend your policy to make it possible for a review committee to weigh the value of sexual content, ensuring that important books remain available on library shelves.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need any further support in this matter.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Christopher Finan
Executive Director

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
The Authors Guild
Children's and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America

A project of the National
Coalition Against Censorship

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