February 8, 2023

Board of Education
Forest Hills Public Schools
6590 Cascade Rd. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

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 because we have received a report that Superintendent Daniel Behm ordered the removal of books without following legally required procedures.

In a Facebook post last fall, Stefanie Boone, a leader in the effort to ban books in the Forest Hills Public Schools, posted an audio recording of a man she identified as Superintendent Behm. (The recording is now available on the NCAC website.) The speaker says that in a private meeting in his office, he ordered Scott Haid, the assistant superintendent for instruction, to remove the books, which he compared to R-rated movies.

The Facebook post does not identify where or when the recording was made, but the speaker is apparently addressing a parent. "I have no desire for that in any of our schools," he said. "I find it embarrassing that those things are there….I don't need you or some other parent to have the burden to come in to go through some bureaucratic process. We have the authority as administrators to just pull them. So, I said go find where they are, pull 'em out, get rid of 'em..."

If these are indeed the words of Superintendent Behm, he has blatantly violated Board policy 5407-AG, which requires that book challenges be adjudicated by a reconsideration committee, which makes a recommendation to the Board Curriculum Committee. The board committee’s decision is final. The superintendent plays no role in the process.

We urge the board to investigate, determine what books have been improperly removed, and return them to the library shelves.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Executive Director
cc:  Kristen Fauson, President, kfauson@fhps.net
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     Daniel S. Behm, Superintendent, dbehm@fhps.net
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