

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

March 24, 2023

School Board
Martin County School District
1939 SE Federal Highway
Stuart, FL 34994

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 response to news reports that nearly 100 books have been removed from District libraries. We would like to suggest that you could avoid future controversy and better serve students by revising your procedures for addressing objections to materials.

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 almost 50 years of experience advising public institutions in developing best practices that address those concerns. For example, your current policy allows principals or curriculum supervisors to unilaterally make decisions regarding the appropriateness of library materials. That can be problematic because it does not permit input from stakeholders. Also, when a decision is made by one person, it leaves the district open to suspicion that that person has acted for improper reasons.

Hence, most districts, including in Florida, require that recommendations be made by committees composed of diverse stakeholders. For similar reasons, those policies specify the criteria that can and cannot be used by the committee in reviewing challenged materials. Specifying those criteria also helps ensure confidence in the process.

Therefore, we encourage you to consider amending your policy. We have created a resource to help school officials address the problem of book challenges, *Material Review and Policy Guidelines and Examples*, which includes sample book challenge procedures from school districts across the country. It is attached.

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

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter.

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

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