

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

March 1, 2023

School Board
St. Johns County School District
40 Orange Street
St. Augustine, FL 32084

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 a statement on your website regarding the removal of library books pending adjudication.

As we understand it, after dozens of books were challenged, many of them have been "removed from circulation while awaiting decision." As a result, students have been deprived of access to potentially valuable resources for an undetermined amount of time. Many districts avoid that problem by creating policies that state that challenged materials must remain on shelves while in review.

We encourage you to adopt similar policies. The district's current policies may encourage others to file meritless challenges for the sole purpose of limiting students' access to ideas they dislike. In addition to harming students, such challenges may put enormous strain on the District which will be required to spend time adjudicating baseless claims.

We understand that challenges to educational materials are often emotionally charged. As a result, it is important that districts adjudicate challenges in a manner which ensures that all parties 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.

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
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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