

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

May 12, 2023

School Board
Sarasota County Schools
1960 Landings Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34231

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 to protest the district's decision to remove Chuck Palahniuk's *Choke* from school libraries in violation of district policy.

According to news reports, the supervisor of Instructional Materials and Library Services, Rob Manoogian, unilaterally made the decision to remove *Choke* from two high school libraries because it, "clearly would not be approved for purchase if it were recommended as a new title."

Mr. Manoogian's action was improper because board policy does not permit books to be removed on that ground. The board policy states that, "Library Media materials in question, can only be removed from circulation and/or used in the school district through the procedures of [the challenge materials] policy." Under that policy, challenged books must be assessed by a committee who makes a final decision which can only be overturned by the school board. Other than serving on a committee, no district administrator plays a role in the challenge process. Therefore the book removal blatantly violated board policy.

Mr. Manoogian's decision was also contrary to the best interests of the district and its students. Using a reevaluation committee ensures that book challenge decisions are made based on objective criteria which prioritize the needs of students. In addition, it ensures that all stakeholders' needs are heard and considered.

Following the district's procedures is also sound policy. Permitting administrators to unilaterally remove books may encourage others to file challenges in the hopes that the administrator may remove books that would otherwise be retained by a committee.

Finally, government agencies, such as schools, must follow the law. Therefore, we urge you to return the book immediately to the school libraries and keep it there until a challenge procedure is completed.

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 important issue.

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

CC: Superintendent Dr. Allison Foster

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
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