

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

August 30, 2023

Board of Education  
Carroll County Public School District  
125 North Court Street  
Westminster, MD 21157

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.

It is our understanding that your district has received over 50 book reconsideration requests and that, in response, Superintendent McCabe has temporarily removed the challenged books from library shelves. This was done in compliance with Administrative Regulation IIAA, which states that books can be removed from the school's media collection pending adjudication of challenges.

However, based on our 50 years of experience advising public institutions in developing best practices that address book challenges, we believe a policy allowing the removal of challenged books while they are under review, is counterproductive: it encourages large-scale meritless challenges and has a deleterious effect on student's education. In fact, many districts' policies include an explicit requirement that access to books remain unrestricted during the reconsideration process.

Such a requirement is in the best interest of the district and its students because a policy that keeps books in the library discourages complainants from filing large-scale meritless challenges. In its absence, mass challenges may be filed for the sole purpose of temporarily, but effectively limiting students' access to ideas the complainers' dislike. When mass challenges are filed in the absence of such a policy, most books removed from libraries are likely to be returned after review. In the meantime, however, students are deprived of these books. For example, in Beaufort County Schools in South Carolina, a hundred books were challenged in October 2022 and were temporarily removed pending adjudication. According to media reports, as of March 2023, 37 books had been reviewed and only three challenges were upheld. For months students were deprived of books based on complaints that were ultimately found to be illegitimate.

Moreover, as Beaufort County demonstrates, large-scale challenges are also harmful to the district itself because they force the administration to spend huge amounts of time and resources adjudicating challenges. Any policy that encourages large-scale challenges is problematic and should be eliminated.

Therefore, we once again urge you to revise your current regulation.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter. 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.

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

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  
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

A project of the National  
Coalition Against Censorship

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