

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

March 25, 2025

School Board  
Siuslaw School District  
2111 Oak St  
Florence, OR 97439

Dear Members of the 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 urge you to reconsider the Board's recent decision to remove Mike Curato's graphic novel *Flamer* from the Siuslaw High School library.

According to news reports,<sup>1</sup> the Siuslaw School District convened a review committee to adjudicate a student's formal complaint based on the profanity and sexual content in *Flamer*. After a review, the committee concluded that *Flamer* should remain in the high school library. However, the School Board overrode the committee's recommendation and voted 4-3 to permanently remove the book from the library.

The Board should be very hesitant to overrule the recommendations of a district review committee. Every book in a library is not right for every child, but the library as a whole should have books which appeal to each of the district's students. Recognizing that book challenges are often highly contentious and emotional, the district's regulations require a formal review to ensure that all parties feel that they have been heard and respected. Review committees play an important role in adjudicating book challenges. Because they represent all stakeholders, they ensure that every party feels that their views have been considered and that decisions about educational material are made in an objective, nonpolitical manner that benefits the school community as a whole. Overturning the review committee's recommendation also opens the Board to claims that *Flamer* was removed based on disagreement with its viewpoint, which would violate the First Amendment. Therefore, school boards should give serious consideration to the committee's recommendations and only overturn them in unusual cases, with transparency as to the board's rationale and process.

The Supreme Court has limited public school officials' discretion to remove library books, in order to ensure the protection of students' First Amendment right to access

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<sup>1</sup> Arellano, Aaron. "Siuslaw School Board Bans Book after Student Complain Regarding Its Language." KEZI 9 News, 13 Mar. 2025,

[www.kezi.com/news/public-comment-fails-to-stop-school-board-from-banning-book-from-high-school-library/article\\_6b895590-0051-11f0-aeb7-3bd1750e8d15.html](http://www.kezi.com/news/public-comment-fails-to-stop-school-board-from-banning-book-from-high-school-library/article_6b895590-0051-11f0-aeb7-3bd1750e8d15.html).

information. As the Court has written, “students must always remain free to inquire, to study, and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding” and “the school library is the principal locus of such freedom.” *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 868-69 (1982). In the same case, the Court also cautioned that “[l]ocal school boards may not remove books from library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books.” *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 872 (1982). Thus, the removal of books from public school libraries to suppress certain viewpoints is a violation of the First Amendment. And following the recommendations of review committees is the best practice to insulate the district from claims that it has acted unconstitutionally in response to any book’s ideas.

Therefore, we urge you to return *Flamer* to the shelves of the Siuslaw High School Library.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Christine Emeran  
Youth Free Expression Program Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression  
The Authors Guild  
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund  
Children’s and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America  
National Council of Teachers of English  
PEN America  
Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators

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