

# **NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP**

# **YOUTH FREE EXPRESSION**

September 16, 2025

School Board  
Escambia County Public Schools  
75 North Pace Blvd  
Pensacola, FL 32505

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 express our concern over proposed revisions to the School Board Policy Manual on challenged materials.

As we understand it, the suggested changes to Policy 2522 would give the superintendent the unilateral authority to review challenged materials and make recommendations to the school board. Furthermore, the proposal eliminates the option to convene a review committee to assess any objections to materials used in classrooms and libraries.<sup>1</sup>

We are concerned that shifting the power of committee appointments to the superintendent and amending your current robust policy for review committees will fail to ensure a representative sampling of the school community, including experts on age-appropriate curricular value. Should you amend your policy, we urge you to ensure that the review committee continues to include the views of all stakeholders. In addition to better serving the Escambia community, a diverse committee which will assess the challenged book as a whole will help insulate the district against claims of viewpoint-based discrimination in book removals, which are prohibited by the First Amendment.

Book challenges are often highly contentious and emotional, and the District's existing regulations are crafted to ensure that all parties feel that they have been represented and respected, and also to ensure that decisions are made based on objective criteria which focus on the needs of students. For example, Policy 2522 provides that a review committee will consist of five community members, one media specialist, one teacher, and one school administrator. It outlines a clear criteria for the committee to follow and states that material should not be removed from circulation before the committee makes a decision.

This policy is eviscerated by a single administrator substituting his or her opinion for the deliberations of a committee that represents all members of the school community. Administrators are often inclined to dislike books that cause controversy and are therefore more likely to call for their removal than a committee, which weighs their literary, artistic and political value for students. And such removals – based on controversy, and without thorough

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<sup>1</sup> Escambia County School Board Policy Manual, po2522 V2 (Sept 12, 2025).

consideration of a book's educational value – risk violating the First Amendment. Therefore, we ask that the Board revisit their policy and ensure that all challenged books are reviewed by a review committee.

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.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Emeran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Christine Emeran  
Youth Free Expression Program Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship

A project of the National  
Coalition Against Censorship

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