

NATIONAL YOUTH COALITION FREE AGAINST EXPRESSION CENSORSHIP

September 30, 2025

Board of Trustees
Leander ISD
204 W. South Street
Leander, TX 78646-0218

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit organizations dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers, and staff. We are writing to object to the district's decision to temporarily remove around forty book titles from curriculum and classroom libraries in anticipation of possible directives from the state. We ask the Board to overturn this unnecessary and harmful removal of classic, valuable literature from Leander's curriculum.

According to a community report, Leander ISD Administration, issued a directive to secondary ELA teachers to "pause the use of the identified texts"¹ in anticipatory compliance with Texas Senate Bill 12, which prohibits certain types of instruction materials in the curriculum and classroom libraries related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As we understand it, books from the list have been temporarily pulled and placed on hold until the district receives more guidance from the state about next steps. It was also reported that some teachers were pre-emptively removing books with similar themes following instructions from their school principal.

The books slated for removal include widely recognized classics in the canon of American literature. Books like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, and *Les Miserables* are included in high school curriculums across Texas and the country. The removal of books from a list developed by educational professionals for the sole reason that they may have content that some would find "controversial" is educationally misguided, disrespectful of teachers' curricular training, and unconstitutional.

We understand that the district may be required to comply with state law, including legal guidance or directives from state officials. However, that is not the genesis of the broad book removal order at issue here; instead, officials in the district ordered the immediate removal of incredibly valuable literature *while* they seek guidance from the state. By instead removing books in mere anticipation of such guidance, the district has chosen to take classic works of literature out of students' hands while they seek such guidance. By removing book titles from the curriculum based on the mere threat of possible enforcement, the district's actions have

¹Strong, Frank. "To Kill a Mockingbird Pulled from Leander ISD Classrooms due to "Anti-DEI" SB12." Substack.com, Anger & Clarity, 24 Sept. 2025, franklinstrong.substack.com/p/to-kill-a-mockingbird-pulled-from?r=1f18kh&utm_medium=ios&utm_campaign=triedRedirect=true.

deprived students of curricular choices made by trained teachers, and degrades the quality of their education – unnecessarily. The Board should immediately reverse any broad book removal order that is not directly required by law. That is particularly true here, where the state law in question is Senate Bill 12 – possibly the most restrictive, viewpoint-based educational censorship law across the country, one that is currently under constitutional [challenge](#), and that results in the viewpoint-based removal of key books in violation of the First Amendment. The district should be in no hurry to comply with this deeply harmful law in advance.

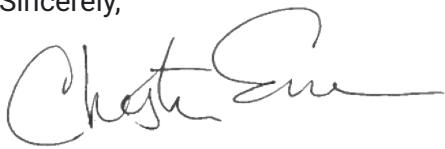
Indeed, the removal of these classic works of literature creates constitutional liability for the district. Basing curricular decisions on fears of controversy amounts to viewpoint discrimination, which has been repeatedly held to be a violation of the First Amendment's protections. Removing books because some members of the community object - or might object - to their content gives those community members impermissible ideological veto power over the curriculum. Labels like "controversial" are vague and can be used as an excuse to oppose books for the ideas they contain, thereby imposing a particular religious or political viewpoint on the educational system. Curricular decisions must be made for pedagogical reasons.

We urge the District to overturn this directive, return the books to the curriculum and classroom libraries immediately, and follow existing book challenge policies in place for adjudicating any formal challenges received. Board Policy EFA establishes procedures for reviewing challenges to instructional materials. This policy requires the creation of a reconsideration committee which may include staff, students, or parents and must include "at least one member of the instructional staff who has experience using the challenged material with students or is familiar with the challenged material's content."²

We call upon the District to reverse this decision, and to continue to permit its teachers to introduce students to some of the greatest works of American literature.

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

Sincerely,



Christine Emeran
Youth Free Expression Program Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

² Leander Independent School District Board Policy Manual, EFA Local Policy (Aug. 8, 2024)

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
American Society of Journalists and Authors
The Authors Guild
Children's and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
National Council of Teachers of English
PEN America
PFLAG National
Texas Freedom Network
Texas Freedom to Read Project

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