

February 8, 2024

RE: Co-Sponsor the Fight Book Bans Act

Dear Members of the House of Representatives

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) urges you to co-sponsor H.R. 6592, the Fight Book Bans Act. This legislation would fight censorship by enabling the Department of Education to provide grants to school districts to cover expenses incurred when they fight off book bans.

Over the past year, more than 3,000 books have been banned in schools across America.¹ These books disproportionately feature stories about LGBTQ+ communities, people of color, and others who have been marginalized. Book bans to this effect are not only discriminatory – they are a violation of students’ First Amendment right to access information.

The First Amendment protects the ability to access almost all information.² School libraries enable students to exercise this right, as they can contain information on topics ranging from science, to art, to travel, as well as different viewpoints. Having a broad and diverse array of reading materials enables students to explore and learn to think for themselves. However, book bans prevent independent thinking by imposing one person’s views on other people’s children. Worse is that removing books from school libraries disproportionately impacts low-income students. Low income students are often more beholden to libraries, because their parents cannot afford to purchase books.

Many schools who recognize that book bans are bad for learning wish to fight attacks on their libraries. However, these schools simply don’t have the resources to do so. Many can’t afford to retain legal counsel, travel to hearings and obtain expert research and advice. By allowing the Department of Education to offer grants to schools to fight censorship, this legislation would protect student’s rights to access information, and create a more informed citizenry.



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¹ Kasey Meehan et. al, *Banned in the USA: the Mounting Pressure to Censor*, Pen America, <https://pen.org/report/book-bans-pressure-to-censor/>.

² See *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982), holding that “the right to receive ideas is a necessary predicate to the recipient’s meaningful exercise of his own rights of speech, press, and political freedom.”

We strongly urge you to co-sponsor the Fight Book Bans Act. Doing so will send a message that you won't sit still and enable censorship to thrive. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jenna Leventoff at jleventoff@aclu.org.

Sincerely,



Christopher Anders
Director, Democracy & Technology



Jenna Leventoff
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