



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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For Immediate Release

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**Carroll County Legislators Express Grave Concerns about HB 785
*Would Remove Local Control from Maryland's Boards of Education***

We strongly oppose House Bill 785 (HB785), the so called "Freedom to Read Act". After watching the February 21st hearing, it is evident that this bill was designed to target Carroll County's Board of Education and take away local control. The advocates for HB785 argue that it is needed to protect librarians from political attacks. While we agree that public librarians should have wide latitude to curate their book catalogs, HB785 goes way beyond that talking point.

For starters, HB785 prohibits any county school superintendent in Maryland from disciplining their own employees for violating board policies. We firmly believe that local school superintendents should be able to manage their school media specialists and all staff as they see fit, and if needed, discipline them appropriately.

During the bill hearing, witnesses in favor of the legislation testified repeatedly that certified professionals should choose what books are or are not appropriate for students instead of their parents. The proponents of HB785 cited the American Library Association (ALA) as one such group of "experts." Considering the president of the ALA, Emily Drabinski, is a self-proclaimed Marxist*, we have serious concerns about what ALA considers "certified professionals" and what is suitable for children.

At the Bill hearing, Delegate Jason Buckel, from Allegany County, referenced six books that were recently pulled from school library shelves in Carroll County. Despite what the supporters of HB785 claim, the content in these books do not feature topics related to race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. These six books were removed because they feature extremely inappropriate sexual material including graphic depictions of sex and rape. Proponents of HB785 also contend that the bill has nothing to do with funding. This is untrue. The synopsis of the bill on page 1 states "Requiring the State Librarian to authorize the State Comptroller to withhold funding from libraries." After watching the complete hearing, it is clear that none of the HB785's proponents actually understand the far-reaching implications of the legislation – or worse – they did not give a straightforward explanation on what the HB785 intends to do.

Carroll County Commissioner Ed Rothstein said it best at the February 22nd Board of County Commissioner meeting. "To take away their (Carroll County Public Schools) ability to do and govern what I believe is appropriate, is downright inappropriate and vindictive. And I don't like it. Let Carroll County run Carroll County."

Handwritten signature of Justin Ready in black ink.

Senator Justin Ready

Handwritten signature of April Rose in blue ink.

Delegate April Rose

Handwritten signature of Chris Tomlinson in black ink.

Delegate Chris Tomlinson

*Citation: NBC News - <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/american-library-association-president-marxist-lesbian-rcna98254>