



NORTH DAKOTA

Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Testimony Supporting House Bill 1205

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Good morning Chairman Klemin and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee. My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. I am testifying on behalf of our organization in support of House Bill 1205 and respectfully request that you render a "DO PASS" on this bill.

Our organization and its constituents feel strongly about protecting minors from harmful materials that depict explicit sexual images. I have heard time and again from our constituents that they are deeply concerned about the type of content their children might be exposed to at their local libraries. It is not simply a matter of being exposed to this content by having their children wander the shelves and stumble upon a book. Many times it is related to libraries directly recommending and/or prominently displaying these books to children, often to the exclusion of other similar books which have less explicit content. It is very clear from American Library Association materials that their agenda for public libraries is to communicate and convince our children of the socially acceptable views of our day. This is one avenue for them to do that.

It has been expressed to us that librarians are concerned about the possibility of a class B misdemeanor, which is understandable. The section in this bill that addresses a penalty clearly states that anyone who subjects a minor to sexually explicit material would be penalized, and the bill goes to great length to define what it means by sexually explicit material. That said, we would recommend that the definitions in section 2-1, subsection a, be reviewed and have more specificity, in part to alleviate these types of concerns. This bill is not perfect, but it is a step in the right direction.

This has nothing to do with "book burning", banning books, censorship, or trampling Constitutional rights. It has everything to do with protecting children from having their innocence stolen from them by reading materials that are inappropriate for their age. Especially materials from a public library that may have been in a children's section and were supposedly already screened for appropriateness.

House Bill 1205 protects our children, but not from the realities of the world. We know that they will need to grow up in a pluralistic and multifaceted society, but let's introduce them to these concepts in a measured and age-appropriate manner. For these reasons, we respectfully ask that you render a "DO PASS" on House Bill 1205.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to stand for any questions.