

Books are being challenged and/or banned at alarming rates across the country, with the majority of these challenges initiated by a small number of groups. It's part of an organized, funded, conservative effort to control what information your children have access to.

Overwhelmingly, book banners continue to target stories by and about people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. In the first half of the 2022-2023 school year, PEN America: Freedom to Write's Banned Book Index revealed that 30% of the 874 unique titles banned during this time period are books about race, racism, or feature characters of color. Meanwhile, 26% of unique titles banned have LGBTQ+ characters or themes.

When faced with challenges to library and classroom collections, it's helpful to call out the overt bigotry behind banning books and to reinforce the rights of all students to feel safe and thrive and to see themselves and their identities reflected in library and classroom materials.

Here are some ways you can make your objection to banning books heard.

Email your School Committee or Board of Library Trustees

- Thank them for their hard work addressing the needs of all students or residents
- Stick with facts and data when discussing the harm book bans cause, such as the information at this link:
 - Educational narrowing of acceptable topics will cause today's students to grow up unprepared for the world beyond school, whether that's in college applications or competing for work
 - Book bans erode first amendment rights

Speak during public comment at a school or library board meeting

- Familiarize yourself with the process ahead of time, as in some places you need to sign up in advance and/or limit your comments to 3 minutes.
 - Stick to one major topic per public comment, rather than split your time between several points
 - Write your statement ahead of time, so that you can practice and time how long you take
 - Thank all board members for their time and their commitment to your town
 - Ground any claims you make or statistics you give in facts and data and reiterate a shared goal of schools and communities where everyone can thrive

- Host events that promote literacy while at the same time drawing attention to how wrong calls to ban books are:
 - Banned Book Club or Read-a-thon
 - Collect banned books to donate to school libraries, your local public library, or a Little Free Library or Little Queer Library.
 - Host a 'who did it best: book vs. movie' event for a banned book

Write a Letter to the Editor of Your Local Newspaper

Know the Process and Best Practices:

- Some papers only allow one letter or signature on a group letter per person per 30 days. Find out your paper’s policies and deadline for publication
- Keep it as short as practical, while still providing enough context and clear messaging
- Consider having others sign your letter as a show of group support, or else plan with allies to submit multiple letters in sequential weeks

Be clear about why you are addressing book bans at this time:

- Say something like, “I was dismayed by the notice my child brought home that some books had been challenged by parents and, as such, were not available while the matter is being reviewed.”

Be direct about the true issues:

- “This isn’t about parental rights – it’s about using our kids’ education to impose a political agenda. Parents have the right to set limits in their own families, but not to make choices for others’ families as well.”
- In the first half of the 2022-2023 school year, [PEN America’s Index of School Book Bans](#) revealed that 30% of the 874 unique titles banned during this time period are books about race, racism, or feature characters of color; and 26% of the unique titles banned have LGBTQ+ characters or themes. What message does that send to students in our schools who are part of these communities? What message does that send to students who are not a part of these communities?

Be willing to call out the politics:

- “Our libraries offer something for everyone. The library staff are not endorsing every book or idea in their collection. People who want to ban books are imposing their political views on others – not the other way around.”
- The fact that [book bans don't work](#) is beside the point. Free speech and independent thinking are the ideals of our nation. Trying to limit or remove those freedoms is not patriotic. It’s censorship.
- [Americans of all political parties oppose book bans](#)

Be clear about the rights parents have:

- “Most books that are being targeted are not assigned. They are simply on the school library shelf. Parents can and should set limits on what their own child reads, but they do not have the right to take that opportunity away from others.”