

# UNIFIED VOICES SUMMIT

## Protecting Educational Freedom in Florida

Office of Governor Ron DeSantis  
State of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

July 31, 2024

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We write as a collective of Florida teachers, media specialists, parents, students, school board members, union leaders, faith leaders, authors, and community members to express our unified concern over public education and the degradation of core constitutional liberties. We ask you, as constituents, to end the wave of educational censorship and book bans that are harming Florida's children and the state's public education system.

State legislation and policies passed under your leadership have resulted in Florida banning the most books in the country by [more than 40%](#); shuttering [interfaith, women, and LGBTQ+ centers](#); removing critical resources as diversity, equity and inclusion has been weaponized and demonized across the state; and interfering with standard curriculum to block reproductive health education, interject religious perspectives, such as requiring lessons in Judeo-Christian values, and erase and distort the historical [struggles for equality](#) experienced by women and Black, Latine, Indigenous, Asian, LGBTQ+ Americans, and the many communities that have been [historically targeted](#) and [marginalized](#).

Under your leadership, Florida educators are fleeing the state at a time when educator [shortages](#) are at an all time high. We have recently watched, with much heartache, the [closure of public schools](#) across the state as your administration's policies continue to pull money from public education. It is distressing to see students, educators, and Floridians of all walks of life targeted and denied core freedoms to speak and express themselves.

All of us have been harmed, and continue to be harmed, by these policies. We are educators whose voices are chilled into silence due to overly broad, vague, punitive, and discriminatory policies. We are students, scared to be ourselves, to share our identities and perspectives, especially as books representing diverse perspectives and identities are yanked from the shelves and robust class discussions can be used as evidence to attack a beloved educator. We are parents, horrified at the targeting of our children, furious over the ideological restrictions on their education, and fed up with the political attacks on our community schools and the people

dedicated to protecting access to them. We are labor union leaders, targeted when educators need us the most. We are faith leaders, dismayed at the deteriorating line between church and state in public education. As Floridians, we demand the protection of core liberties promised to us in the Florida and United States Constitutions.

Governor DeSantis, you have led us into this dark night of censorship. But you can also lead us out. We call on you today, and all of Florida's leadership, to stop these tactics of suppression and instead provide the critical resources necessary to truly protect parents' choice in education and ensure our communities flourish with successful, accessible, inclusive, high-quality public schools.

Discrimination and erasure must not be Florida's future. Public schools are and must remain a public good. They must be a shining example of our democratic values. We ask that you join us in partnership and specifically ask that you:

- Encourage the Florida Legislature to take concrete steps in the 2025 legislative session to roll back harmful bills such as HB 1 (2021), HB7 (2022), HB 1557 (2022), HB 1467 (2022), HB 1069 (2023), SB 266 (2023), and HB 1291 (2024) and pass policies to reduce the harms caused by these censorial bills;
- Direct Education Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr. to revise the state guidance to educators, administrators, and district leaders to ensure that books are not removed from schools and libraries for an unlimited amount of time without consideration of their literary and educational value;
- Provide the much needed categorical funding to ensure every classroom and school library has a professionally maintained, engaging, and representative library collection, especially in K-5; and
- Host a town hall for Floridians to discuss these issues and for you to hear from us directly about why we desperately need a change of course away from discriminatory policies and law.

We believe in protecting the freedoms of every American. We believe in the importance for students to have the freedom to read and to learn. We believe in the principles of academic freedom to ensure our educators have the latitude to lead robust classroom debate. We believe that we are stronger when all our voices and perspectives are heard and celebrated.

And so we say today in one unified voice, Florida will be the example of citizenry reclaiming their democracy, protecting their constitutional liberties, and supporting each other in the long struggle for equality. We hope you will join us.

Signed,

American Civil Liberties Union of Florida  
Audubon Park Covenant Church  
Books & Books

Central Floridians for Social Equality  
Citizens for Truth and Justice in Education  
Democratic Public Education Caucus of Florida  
Educational Solutions and Resources, LLC  
FAME  
Families Against Banning Books  
Florida Freedom to Read Project  
Jane Addams Peace Association  
League of Women Voters of the Saint Petersburg Area  
Miami Freedom Project  
Moms for Libros  
NAACP Florida State Conference  
Palm Harbor Library  
Parents for Books  
Pastors for Florida's Children  
PEN America  
PRISM FL, Inc  
Space Coast Progressive Alliance  
The Purple Group  
Together for Hope  
United Teachers of Dade  
White Rose Books & More  
Youth Action Fund  
Zen & the Arts  
Katherine B, Coral Gables  
Laurel R, Ormond Beach  
Cassidy D, Miami  
Kathryn M, Lake Worth  
Candice A, Saint Petersburg  
Helena R, Miami  
Suzanne W, Altamonte Springs  
Isabella L, Pembroke Pines  
Diana P, Riverview  
Shawn W, Gulf Breeze  
Katie M, Orange City  
Jessica W, Leesburg  
Sophia B, Miami  
Isabella D, Naples  
Evan F, Gotha  
Amy R, Satellite Beach  
Paul R, Satellite Beach  
Nicole B, Winter Park  
Christine C, DeLand  
Jennifer D, Homestead

Alana N, Apopka  
Tania G, Kissimmee  
Van G, Miami  
Eimear R, Orlando  
Karen L, Boca Raton  
Sheila Z, Ormond Beach  
Madeline B, Tallahassee  
Avion G, Boynton Beach  
Tamara V, Groveland  
Cecilia C, Dania Beach  
Chayna H, Miami  
Myles S, Mascotte  
Dani S, Orlando  
Brette G, Orlando  
Marjie F, Vero Beach  
Anne T, Saint Johns  
Amy P, Naples  
Mara S, Sebastian  
Karla M, Miami  
Carmen P, Miami  
Frances C, Miami  
Ana Sofia P, Miami  
Arlene J, Vero Beach  
Aaryn F, Orange Park  
Larry Z, Ormond Beach  
Kelly K, Palm Bay  
Anne H, Destin  
Victoria D, Hobe Sound  
Joisha M, Newberry  
Karolyn B, Tallahassee  
Susan J, Saint Augustine  
Pablo S, Miami  
LS, Miami  
Miranda S, Miami  
Emily L, Tallahassee  
Jennie F, New Smyrna Beach  
Page C  
Polly W, De Leon Springs  
Nadine H, Saint Augustine  
Mitchell K, Coral Gables  
Mary C, Palm Coast  
Coleen S, Ormond Beach  
Carolyn T, Orange City  
Anya S, Miami Beach

Kristin M, Naples  
Robin W, Sanford  
Mary D, Vero Beach  
Amber S, Tallahassee  
Mark M, Miami  
Jessica E, Miami  
Cristina N, Coral Gables  
Ed B, Coral Gables  
Bonnie P, Daytona Beach  
Lyana R, Miami  
Tom H, Miami Beach  
Cary W, Tallahassee  
Leah R, Tallahassee  
Rebecca B, Tarpon Springs  
Connie W, Vero Beach  
Hope L, Fort Lauderdale  
Laura J, Jacksonville  
Vincent L, Delray Beach  
Ann D, Vero Beach  
Viviana F, Key Biscayne  
Willa H, West Palm Beach  
Ivette V, Stuart  
Patricia A, Miami  
Catie S, Key Biscayne  
Alix R, Fort Lauderdale  
Carmen L, Miami  
Gaël L, Miami Beach  
Julie J, Vero Beach  
Polly D, Navarre  
Riley G  
Joan G, Miami  
Kimberly D, Satellite Beach  
Rebecca W, Miami Beach  
Joanna W, Seffner  
Maryann P, Belleair Beach  
Cecilia W, Miami  
Crystal B, Jacksonville  
Kathryn M, Lake Worth  
Maria M, Miami  
Natalia D, Miami  
Tile A, Miami  
Caitlin J, Miami  
Amie D, Miami  
Marly S, Vero Beach

Bryan H, Miami  
Dana S, Miami  
Gail C, Myakka City  
Valentina M, Hialeah  
Ellie G, Miami  
Susan G, Plantation  
Tara S, Coventry  
Richard G, Fort Lauderdale  
Leslie S, Clermont  
Sabrina J, Hallandale Beach  
Nancy W, East Palatka  
Mary Ann P  
Jennifer T, Zephyrhills  
Juan B, Hollywood  
Chloe H, Gainesville  
Brandy H, Longwood  
Monique C, Gainesville  
Matthew L, Tampa  
Sharon H, Bradenton  
Luisa S, Miami  
Caryn P, Coral Gables  
Carolina C, Miami  
Aymarah R, Miami  
Silvia M, Doral  
Angela M, Miami  
Vanessa N, Miami  
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Kellie C, South Easton  
Beverly C, Spring Hill  
María L, Coral Gables  
Aidil O, Miami  
Kristin M, Gainesville  
Gloria L, North Miami Beach  
Sharon P, Orlando  
Valerie L, Bradenton  
Karin D, Miami Beach  
Silvana R, Miami  
Liz S, Miami  
Susan G, Miami  
Maxime D, Miami  
Paula S, Tallahassee  
Amy M, Miami  
MaryBeth E, Winter Haven  
Jennifer R, Miami

Maria T, Key Biscayne  
Gina S, Miami  
Thomas R, Bradenton  
Frances A, Miami  
Andrea P, Orlando  
Jessica C, Casselberry  
Aimee G, Miami  
Domonique M, Panama City Beach  
Heather G, Tallahassee  
Jeremy G, Melbourne  
Nadja S, Miami  
Tracy D, Miami  
Beverly R, Stuart  
Trisha L, Lutz  
Gina D, Satellite Beach  
Michele D, Miami  
Elizabeth A, Palm Bay  
Neelah G  
Christina B, Key Biscayne  
Shawndra W, Miami  
Vivian B, Miami  
Teresa T, Fayetteville  
Kelly L, DeLand  
Karn J, Sun City Center  
Cheryl W, Orlando  
Vicki G, Miami  
Cynthia J  
Diana C, Sanford  
Tracey D, Ocoee  
Khushboo P  
Gisette R, Hialeah  
Noosha M  
David D, Coconut Creek  
Barb N, Fort Myers Beach  
Cathleen D, Palmetto  
Hedieh S, Miami  
Cherie H, Wesley Chapel  
Margaret R, Coral Springs  
Deborah D, Ocala  
Jorge P, Miami  
Salvatore V, Altamonte Springs  
Nicole C  
William J, Sarasota  
Marlene W, Sarasota

Michelle G, Saint Petersburg  
Suzy B, Loxahatchee  
Elizabeth K, Jacksonville  
Judi D, Saint Cloud  
Barbara M, Palm Harbor  
Cathy D, Cape Coral  
Chris S, DeLand  
Margaret D, DeLand  
Elizabeth W, Tampa  
Kris S, Ormond Beach  
Andrea F, Tampa  
Barbara S, Jupiter  
Kristen P, Orlando  
Barbara M, Tarpon Springs  
Debbie P, Port Orange  
Jo Ann L  
Sarah S, Miami  
John C, Naples  
BJ S, Boca Raton  
Carrie F, Melbourne  
Jennifer A  
Marica S, Cape Coral  
James M, West Palm Beach  
Patricia S, Delray Beach  
Timothy L, Fort Lauderdale  
Sylvia W, West Palm Beach  
Kristine S, Melbourne  
Marie M, Bradenton  
Jan M  
Kristin M, Naples  
Mic E, Tampa  
James Z, Flagler Beach  
Allen H, Ocala  
Richard F, Sarasota  
Sarah R, Casselberry  
Lauren J, Winter Springs  
Nanette C, Sarasota  
Mary I, Miami  
Nancy G, Miami  
Lenore M, Saint Petersburg  
Peggy H, Gainesville  
Heidi N, Port Saint Lucie  
Maria M, Fort Lauderdale  
Kathleen G, Pensacola



Celia K, Miami  
Henry E, Tamarac  
Maria T, Key Biscayne  
Rosemary C, Tallahassee  
Mike L, Pensacola  
Glen V, New Port Richey  
Deborah M, Land O Lakes  
Ira C, Gainesville  
Tanya C, Chuluota  
Pamela M, Melbourne  
Arlene L, West Palm Beach  
Barbara G, Stuart  
Jodelle M, Orange Park  
Megan T, Bonita Springs  
Stacy V, Lake Mary  
Debi M, Miami  
Michael R, Tallahassee  
Sara L, Pensacola  
Nancy C, Naples  
Debra C, Saint Petersburg  
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Maureen K, Seminole  
Janet H, Naples  
Patricia S, Lakeland  
Andrew F, Saint Petersburg  
Patricia P, Naples  
Marc R, Temple Terrace  
Kimberley T, Jacksonville  
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Nicole K, Weeki Wachee  
Cheryl G, Miami Shores  
Roberta W, Ocala  
Adrienne D, Miami  
April V, Jacksonville  
Elizabeth D, Lutz  
Cheryl T, Venice  
Norma N, Sanford  
Aileen S, Miami  
Amy A  
Jan D, Key Biscayne  
Sherrie R, Brooksville  
Teri D, Orlando  
Carol L, Key Biscayne  
Elizabeth M, Bonita Springs

Grace G, Nokomis  
Teresa M, Gainesville  
Tyler S, Venice  
Melody M, Tampa  
Nancy A  
Ximena V, North Miami Beach  
Carol J, Tampa  
Jennifer W, Tampa  
Cristina V, Key Biscayne  
Bev R, Stuart  
Rebecca G, Sun City Center  
Sharon S  
D'Spencer L, Port Saint Lucie  
Ann P, Winter Park  
Kayla S, Crestview  
Ben B, Thonotosassa  
Elizabeth B, Jupiter  
William W, Lutz  
Anne C, Saint Pete Beach  
Brent P, Leesburg  
Craig C, Saint Petersburg  
Leslie S, Naples  
Abe L, Bonita Springs  
Susan G, Naples  
Bennie W, Saint Petersburg  
Jessica A, Miami  
Kerry W, Miami  
Kathleen M, Saint Petersburg  
Crystal M, Pensacola  
Ellen W, Gulf Breeze  
Marisa S, Tarpon Springs  
Diana M, Tarpon Springs  
Jan K  
Steve N, Boynton Beach  
Kenneth M, Hastings  
Stephanie F, Coral Springs  
Barbara T, Miami  
Ashley P, Miami  
John J  
Bonnie P, Daytona Beach  
Nancy W, Margate  
Rebekah B, Riverview  
Diana D, Valrico  
Don E, Naples

Trenece R  
Rob B, Palm Bay  
Anne M, West Palm Beach  
Sarah O, Fort Lauderdale  
Blake R  
Anita O, Lecanto  
Kristine S, Gulfport  
Erin K  
Carmen L, Miami  
Michelle A, Hollywood  
Kathy D, Palm Beach  
Andrea W, Eustis  
Carol G, West Palm Beach  
Virginia A, Miami  
Frances G, Bradenton  
Sharon A, Boca Raton  
Ginny S, Saint Cloud  
Amber B, Lake City  
Taryn R  
Toni B, Daytona Beach  
Maria N, Homestead  
Elizabeth W, Stuart  
Africa, F  
Ansley S, Cantonment  
Liz E, Saint Augustine  
Mary S, North Fort Myers  
A.L. S, Miami Beach  
Connie M, Crescent City  
Brandi W, Marco Island  
Melissa B, Lauderhill  
Russ Z, Downers Grove  
Larry B, Lutz  
Melinda W, Sanford  
Rosalie H, Gainesville  
Anne G, Gulfport  
Valerie B, New Port Richey  
Brian P, Wilton Manors  
Isabelle L, Pembroke Pines  
Ana R, Miami  
Rebecca Q, Orlando  
John B, Bronson  
Diana C, Bradenton  
Marcia I, Tampa  
Willa H, West Palm Beach

Patricia H, Gainesville  
Ellen H, Bradenton  
L R, Saint Petersburg  
Nancy F, Miami Shores  
Jim L, Saint Petersburg  
Richard A, Miami  
Bill Z, Bonita Springs  
Ruth S, Saint Petersburg  
Carol C, Hobe Sound  
Tricia F, Venice  
Marian R, Winter Haven  
Sasha C, Bradenton  
Robert C, Lake Wales  
Albertina M, Orange Park  
Margaret L, Clearwater  
Kellie B, Sarasota  
Kayla K, Cocoa Beach  
Frances P, Saint Augustine  
Kathryn C, Bellview  
Jessica M, Naples  
Marie V, Lake Worth  
Barbara I, Melbourne  
Melissa V, Safety Harbor  
Deborah K, Delray Beach  
Andrea P, Orlando  
Cindy M  
Debbie P, Port Orange  
Morgan K, Saint Petersburg  
Kim A, Bradenton  
David M, West Palm Beach  
Lori M, Saint Cloud  
Erin M, Winter Parks  
Calvin J  
Michael D, Venice  
Heidi R, Delray Beach  
Diane M, Defuniak Springs  
Patricia B, Miami  
Barbara B, Ponte Verda  
Caroline M, Miami  
Tracy D, North Port  
Judith G, Hallandale Beach  
Sandra S, Orange City  
Lynn M, Rockledge  
Michael A, Fort Myers

Suzanne H, Orlando  
Marie M, Bradenton  
Karen W, Melbourne  
Suzanne J, Vero Beach  
Kathleen P, Ave Maria  
Carol R, Daytona Beach  
Sandra R, Delray Beach  
Judy B, Fort Myers  
Valerie B, Tamarac  
Kathy H, North Palm Beach  
Frances W, Tampa  
Pamela C, Ormond Beach  
Cindy R, Pinellas Park  
Cameron D  
Jacqueline A  
Eric S, Lehigh Acres  
Tayna E, Tallahassee  
Gael L, Miami Beach  
Erin D, Kissimmee  
Crystal E, Miami  
Sophie P, Miami  
Katherine W, Miami  
Cortney C, Miami  
Michele D, Miami  
Victoria S, Palm City  
Francisca P, Miami  
Julie G, Sanford  
Lisa T, Fort Pierce  
Megan C, Tallahassee  
Brenda P, Lutz  
and 112 anonymous signatories.

CC: Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr.  
Florida Board of Governors  
Florida College Board  
Senate President Kathleen Passidomo  
Representative Paul Renner, Speaker of the House