



Dear Superintendents and School Board Attorneys of Florida's Public School Districts,

Our organizations have come together to share our concerns over new state restrictions on the information included in our Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS curriculum offered in Florida's public schools. When HB 1069 went into effect on July 1, 2023, the Florida Department of Education inherited a new responsibility to approve this curriculum before districts could deliver it during the 23/24 school year. That did not happen.

Not only did the state delay this process to the detriment of Florida students, when the requirements to earn state approval were finally communicated in late summer of 2024, the requested revisions were made verbally to each district, avoiding any documentation and Florida's sunshine laws. Without these new limits in writing, we have relied heavily on reporting to try to determine what is missing from our once locally-approved curriculum. Topics covering basic anatomy, consent, sexual assault, domestic violence, contraception, teen pregnancy, and abortion have been removed, aged-up, or heavily restricted over allegations the content is no longer "age-appropriate" for the classroom.

Our concern is that these new limitations imposed on classroom curriculum may be preemptively expanded to school and classroom libraries, thus limiting the valuable and important support they offer students. Unfortunately, this kind of overreach/expansion happened in the wake of HB 1557 as books were removed from libraries to over-comply with vague and punitive laws.

Age-appropriateness as it applies to library and literary materials is highly subjective. School and classroom libraries offer students of varying experiences, abilities, maturities, and interests vital opportunities to access resources that can meet their needs. What is appropriate for one student to self-select in the library, may not be right for another.

Whatever revised "age-appropriate" limitations your district has been asked to implement in your curriculum, please remember that they do not apply to your libraries. The Florida Attorney General's office is clear on this point, stating that "the Legislature's decision that certain materials are inappropriate for use in classroom instruction does not mean they are categorically inappropriate in the very different setting of a school library" (*Parnell v School Board of Lake County*). Library professionals should be trusted in their professional expertise to make age-relevant curation decisions for the unique student bodies that they serve.

The state limitations on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS education have created a curriculum that falls short of most parents' expectations. Students have a right to expand their education beyond the classroom and within the boundaries set by their parents, not the state. Our school libraries help ensure all students have access to the learning opportunities that they seek and need. Please protect that access.

Signed,

Stephana Ferrell, public school parent & Director at Florida Freedom to Read Project

Katie Blankenship, Senior Director and Counsel, PEN America Florida

John Chrastka, Executive Director at EveryLibrary

Christine Emeran, Director, Youth Free Expression Program at the National Coalition Against Censorship