



Penguin
Random
House

January 7, 2025

Escambia County School Board (via U.S. Postal Service and email at eodom@ecsdfl.us)
Vernon McDaniel Building
75 N Pace Boulevard
Pensacola, FL 32505

RE: Removal of *Too Bright to See* by Kyle Lukoff

Dear Escambia County School Board Members:

PEN America and Penguin Random House urge you to return *Too Bright to See* by Kyle Lukoff back to Escambia County school library shelves. *Too Bright to See* was challenged in February 2023 and has now been permanently removed from Escambia County school libraries. We are dismayed that the Board has taken further steps to restrict Escambia County students' right to read and put their ability to learn in jeopardy.

Too Bright to See, which includes an 11-year old transgender character, was initially challenged in February 2023 for "contain[ing] sexualities and alternate gender identities" and because its alleged purpose was "indoctrination." A Newbery Honor Book, National Book Award Finalist, and Winner of the Stonewall Book Award among numerous other [accolades](#), *Too Bright to See* is a "gentle, glowing wonder, full of love and understanding, full of everything any of us would wish for our children," and "a nuanced and compelling exploration of gender, friendship, and family."

Under the Board's new review process, the review committee tied on whether to keep *Too Bright to See*, throwing the decision to the Board appointees who made comments that the book "[t]argets misgender identity," has an "overall message" that "is errant and evil," and amounts to "absolute indoctrination of transgenderism." They voted 4-1 to remove the book.

Author Kyle Lukoff, who is a plaintiff in *PEN America v. Escambia County School Board*, is an award-winning children's book writer and a former school librarian. In his letter (attached) to this Board, Mr. Lukoff, "a professional whose whole life has been dedicated to helping kids find books that they will love," is dismayed that children are being denied the right to his work. Mr. Lukoff's books, many of which feature trans and other underrepresented characters, have played an essential role in diversifying library collections and have often been lifelines for kids eager to see themselves represented in literature.

The Board previously voted to remove another of Mr. Lukoff's books, *When Aidan Became a Brother*, which also includes a transgender character. Denying Escambia County school children the opportunity to read Mr. Lukoff's books denies them access to the world he has created to be shared, one in which they may see themselves, learn about others, and build empathy.

Children's literature expert Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop once said: "Literature transforms the human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience." Literature can open doors, hearts, and minds, helping young people to gain empathy and insight into those different from them. Forms of suppression and the censorship of ideas at the behest of some ideologies or viewpoints threatens the freedom to read, and puts students' opportunity to learn about difference in jeopardy.

We request that the Escambia County School Board reverse the decision to remove *Too Bright To See* and allow the students of Escambia County access to this vital work of literature.

Sincerely,

Katie Blankenship
Senior Director and Counsel
PEN America Florida

Skip Dye
Chair, Intellectual Freedom Task Force
Penguin Random House

Enclosed: Letter from Kyle Lukoff

Cc: Nicole Smith (nsmith@rumberger.com)