



FLORIDA FREEDOM  
TO READ PROJECT



Dear District School Leaders,

On behalf of the Florida Freedom to Read Project, PEN America Florida, Authors Against Book Bans, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and We Need Diverse Books, a cadre of organizations dedicated to defending free expression, we write to urge your district to act in accordance with constitutional protections and restore access to books that have been removed from school libraries under pressure from the State of Florida.

As you are aware, [Judge Carlos Mendoza recently ruled that significant portions of House Bill 1069](#) were unconstitutional, finding that the State had exceeded its authority and that the resulting censorship regime unlawfully restricted students' rights. This ruling affirms what many free speech advocates have long warned: that the overbroad, vague mandates of HB 1069 compelled districts to suppress access to literature in violation of the First Amendment.

This decision provides your district with both a clear legal obligation and a vital opportunity. Florida's students deserve full access to books, especially those offering diverse perspectives and literary value. Arbitrary removals have not only deprived young people of vital educational resources but also eroded the trust of parents, educators, and communities, who expect schools to uphold both professional standards and constitutional rights.

We urge you to:

1. **Restore Removed Titles:** Immediately return to circulation the books withdrawn solely due to HB 1069.
2. **Lift the prohibitions on titles that did not undergo a constitutionally sound review.** This will enable media specialists to either accept donations or seek approval for purchases to restore titles based on students' needs and interests.
3. **Review with Integrity:** Ensure that any future review of materials adheres to established professional standards, including the Supreme Court's *Miller Test* for obscenity, which

requires that works be judged as a whole, in context, and with consideration for their serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. This means a single passage taken out of context cannot be used to justify removal.

4. Affirm Constitutional Commitments: Publicly state your district's commitment to uphold the First Amendment rights of students, parents, and educators.

We jointly stand ready to assist districts as you navigate this moment. Should resources be a barrier, we are exploring ways to support schools in replenishing collections, including possible donations of titles named in the court's ruling.

The court has made it clear that state-imposed censorship cannot override the rights of students and communities to access literature. We respectfully urge you to act swiftly to correct past removals and restore public trust in your district's commitment to education and free expression.

Sincerely,

Kristen Arnett  
Florida Chapter Leader  
Authors Against Book Bans

Stephana Ferrell  
Director of Research & Insight  
Florida Freedom to Read Project

William Johnson  
Director  
PEN America Florida

Caroline Richmond  
Executive Director, WNDB  
We Need Diverse Books

Lee Rowland  
Executive Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship