



The Virginia Library Association (VLA), a professional organization representing more than 4,800 librarians, libraries, and library supporters who live or work in the Commonwealth of Virginia, supports the First Amendment rights, including the freedom to read, of all residents of the Commonwealth. We oppose the removal of books from libraries in violation of local policies designed to protect readers from censorship. Virginia has become a hotbed of censorship and library intimidation. Inflammatory rhetoric, including calls to burn books or claims that books in high school libraries must be appropriate for elementary school children, have attracted national attention. Perhaps most concerningly, we are seeing a rise in non-librarian administrators taking unilateral action to remove books from libraries without undergoing proper and legal review according to their own policies.

These policies are in place in order to ensure that libraries are welcoming places for readers to discover and learn about the world in its great diversity. They recognize that not all books are for all readers, and also that powerful individuals do not have the right to censor what other people read. Unfortunately, the books that are under scrutiny at this time have largely been written by and about people of color and LGBTQ+ people. In November 2021, the American Library Association stated,

*“In recent months, a few organizations have advanced the proposition that the voices of the marginalized have no place on library shelves. To this end, they have launched campaigns demanding the censorship of books and resources that mirror the lives of those who are gay, queer, or transgender or that tell the stories of persons who are Black, Indigenous, or persons of color. Falsely claiming that these works are subversive, immoral, or worse, these groups induce elected and non-elected officials to abandon constitutional principles, ignore the rule of law, and disregard individual rights to promote government censorship of library collections.”*

The VLA takes seriously our commitment to help all people, including those from marginalized communities, find and use books that speak to their individual needs. Librarians are well-trained, highly trusted professionals. We take collection development seriously, by considering both the needs of our local communities and the recommendations of trusted sources into account when purchasing or removing books from our libraries. Policies for considering challenges to individual titles in our

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collections reflect the importance of balancing community and individual needs with the Constitutional right to free speech and access to information. We call on library administrators and boards to oppose censorship and defend the rule of law by following their established policies and supporting their libraries and librarians.

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