



STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MICHIGAN'S STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION
IN SUPPORT OF FREEDOM TO READ**

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education recognizes that school library media centers provide Michigan students and staff equitable access to print and digital resources critical to supporting 21st century teaching and learning, and the Michigan Department of Education [Top 10 Strategic Education Plan](#) for Michigan's schools and students;

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education further recognizes that certified library media specialists serve a critical role in increasing student achievement by supporting, collaborating, and co-teaching with classroom teachers in reading development, integrating information and technology literacy skills into the content curriculum, and utilizing their professional knowledge and judgment in the selection of books and other materials;

WHEREAS, the First Amendment of the United States Constitution protects free speech and the freedom to read and write;

WHEREAS, the freedom to read a rich, diverse collection of books and other materials is essential for a strong democracy;

WHEREAS, during the first half of the 2022-23 school year, PEN America's Index of School Book Bans listed 1,477 instances of individual books banned, which affected 874 unique titles—an increase of 28 percent compared to the prior six months of January – June 2022, during which the total instances of book bans affected over 800 titles, which equated to over 100 titles removed from student access each month, with these bans occurring in 37 states;

WHEREAS, an increasing number of book bans have departed from best practice guidelines outlined by the Michigan Association of School Librarians and the American Association of School Librarians;

WHEREAS, book bans seek to impose restrictions on all students and families and would substitute the political, ideological, or cultural preferences of those calling for such bans for those of all members of the school community;

WHEREAS, book bans have multifaceted, harmful consequences on

- students who have a right to explore a diverse range of stories and perspectives;
- students from historically marginalized backgrounds who benefit from "seeing" themselves represented in literature;

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- teachers and librarians who are working under increasingly hostile scrutiny that has a chilling effect on teaching and learning; and
- parents and other care givers who value openness, tolerance, and acceptance for diverse viewpoints, perspectives, and opinions in their children;

WHEREAS, in the first six months of 2023, 30% of the unique titles banned were books about race, racism, or feature characters of color, and 26% of the unique titles banned had LGBTQ+ characters or themes;

WHEREAS, books addressing death, grief, mental illness, and suicide are increasingly targeted alongside nonfiction books that discuss feelings and emotions written for teenage and young adult audiences that confront these topics frequently;

WHEREAS, “soft censorship,” the quiet removal or hiding of books, presents a subtle challenge that may be obscuring the magnitude of the problem;

WHEREAS, in Michigan during the 2022-23 school year, 18 books were banned in five school districts, including award-winning young adult novels such as *The Lovely Bones*, *All Boys Aren't Blue*, and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*—written for teenage and young adult audiences that experience the themes and topics discussed in these books frequently;

WHEREAS, a [2022 poll](#) found that over 70% of parents oppose book banning; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Board of Education v. Pico* that schools may not remove books based on “narrowly partisan or political grounds,” as this kind of censorship will result in “official suppression of ideas.”

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education supports parental rights to choose the age appropriateness for their child and right to make critical decisions with their local school.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the State Board of Education expresses concern about the spreading problem of book banning and proliferating threats to freedom of expression in Michigan’s schools, and reaffirms the commitment to supporting writers’ freedom of expression, and the freedom of all Michigan children to read books without government censorship;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board of Education calls on local school boards and educational institutions to follow outlined best practice guidelines when approaching challenges to books;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board of Education calls on local school boards and educational institutions to protect the rights of students to learn and the ability of educators and librarians to teach students, including by way of providing students with the opportunity to read a wide array of books reflecting a multitude of viewpoints and perspectives.

Adopted on June 13, 2023, by a vote of 6-2.