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The Maryland Library Association is a staunch supporter of intellectual freedom. We strongly oppose any attempts to limit access to ideas and information. The Maryland Library Association believes school librarians provide effective leadership in collection development, curriculum development, and information literacy instruction.

The library provides an impartial environment where individuals and their interests and inquiries are brought together with ideas and information spanning the spectrum of knowledge and opinions.

Limiting access to information and ideas is antithetical to American values and hinders learning, idea-sharing, and democracy. It is especially harmful to marginalized and underrepresented students. Students rely on literature and other sources of information to make connections, feel a sense of belonging, and learn about the world around them. Recent efforts by local groups to silence the narratives of LGBTQ+ people and those of non-white racial identities are troubling. These efforts could set a precedent that could have dangerous implications across our state and the rest of the country.

Recently, a small group with extremist views has successfully launched a campaign to temporarily remove nearly 60 books from Carroll County public schools. However, when given the opportunity during the September 13th Carroll County Board of Education meeting, this group made no substantial argument for why any of these books should be permanently removed. Efforts like this to censor the collections in school libraries are fear-based, and more importantly, contrary to the First Amendment. Allegations that the removed books contain "sexually explicit" content take short passages out of context and ignore the books' literary, educational, and scientific value. Legal precedents regarding obscenity have repeatedly stated that works must be considered as a whole and that libraries need to err on the side of inclusion and access rather than removing materials and prohibiting access. As librarians, educators, and members of a free society, it is our responsibility to defend the right of all students to access information and ideas.

The Maryland Library Association actively advocates and educates in defense of intellectual freedom—the rights of library users to freely read, seek information, and speak as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession and a fundamental right in our democratic society. The Maryland Library Association affirms the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to View, and Freedom to Read policy statements in support of acquiring and managing collections. The Maryland Library Association urges the Carroll County Public Schools Board of Education to return the removed books to their school library collections and to respect the First Amendment and the right and ability of parents to make decisions for their children.

