



*The Voice of the Library Community*

**New York Library Association**

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## **S6350B (May) / A6873B (O'Donnell)**

*An act to amend the education law, in relation to enacting the "Freedom to Read Act"*

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The New York Library Association (NYLA) supports the above referenced legislation.

If enacted, this bill would amend Education Law Article 2 §13, a section of the Dignity for All Students Act. It would require the boards of education and the trustees of every school district in New York to create policies that ensure school libraries and library staff are empowered to curate and develop library collections that provide students with access to the widest array of developmentally appropriate materials available to those schools.

Student access to diverse perspectives and challenging ideas is essential for providing robust education that prepares learners to be active, informed members of their communities. Regrettably, access is not always guaranteed.

In 2022, the American Library Association documented a record 1,259 attempts to censor 2,571 unique library titles and resources across the United States, up from 729 challenges to 1,858 titles in 2021. Of these campaigns, 51% are reported to have targeted books, programs, displays, and other materials in schools and school libraries. New York is no exception to this trend, with challenges to library materials in school districts from Western New York to Long Island.

Fortunately, many of New York's school districts have voluntarily adopted library materials acquisition policies that have helped to safeguard student access to materials representing varied ideas and points of view. However, such policies are not required and, where in place, are not obligated to protect the scope of materials available to students. The requirement outlined in this legislation would extend the protection offered by these policies statewide, as well as establish a baseline principle of intellectual and perspectival inclusivity to which such policies must adhere.

Furthermore, by empowering library staff like certified school library media specialists to lead collections development, schools benefit from the expertise these individuals have as specialists in both the fields of education and library science. Their training allows them to curate collections that offer broad ranges of perspectives and are aligned to curriculum, representative



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of students and their interests, and differentiated according to the full range of needs and abilities found in student populations.

For these reasons, the New York Library Association urges the legislature to pass S6350B/A6873B, the Freedom to Read Act.

For additional information, please contact Max Prime at the New York Library Association at 518.432.6952.