



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Education
in support of S.2528/H.4229, An Act regarding free expression,
by Carolyn Lee, LWVMA Good Governance Specialist
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA), comprised of 43 Leagues representing 110 communities from Capes Cod and Ann to the Berkshires, strongly supports S.2528/H.4229, An Act regarding free expression. The concept of banning books is so foreign to the idea of democracy, to the concept of free speech and to the history of this country that it is frightening that this even needs to be stated.

Free speech has always included the freedom to write. It has assured the right for others to speak or write, and to assure access to written materials, regardless of the opinions and ideas expressed. Censorship based on political or personal opinions, whether in school libraries or anywhere else, has no place in a democracy. Political reasoning for banning books has a long history as a means to force a totalitarian state upon citizens. This bill will help marginalized communities have their histories accurately represented and available to all.

This bill is narrow, only addressing issues that have arisen in schools, where there have been almost 100 challenges filed based on desires to censor and ban books, primarily those dealing with race and sexuality. It is well crafted for that purpose.

This bill basically prohibits the banning of books from school or public libraries based on citizen requests to “protect children” or any other reason. It prohibits librarians from removing books based on their political or personal views. It mandates development of a public policy for selection and use of library materials that incorporates the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights. There are optional penalties for librarians found to have removed books improperly.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes in the individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. The League is convinced that individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.

LWVMA encourages you to report out favorably S.2528/H.4229. We need to protect our freedoms now more than ever.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.