



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 329

Resolution calling on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to Sign, H.R.6592, the Fight Book Bans Act.

By Council Members Ossé, Gennaro, Cabán, Sanchez, Abreu, Ayala, Hudson, Nurse, Won and Brewer

Whereas, Attempts to ban books in schools and libraries are increasing across the United States; and

Whereas, The American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom's preliminary book ban data for the first 8 months of 2023 reported a 20% increase in book challenges from the same period in 2022, with 695 attempts to censor library materials and challenges to 1,915 unique titles; and

Whereas, Similarly, PEN America found that during the 2022-2023 school year, book bans increased by 33%; and

Whereas, Exposing students to a variety of different experiences, cultures, identities, and abilities through characters and narratives that have traditionally been underrepresented in schools and classroom libraries is critical to the development of empathy and community and for fostering equity across all learning environments; and

Whereas, Book bans disproportionately target books by or about people of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, intersex, asexual, and other (LGBTQIA+) individuals; and

Whereas, During the 2022-2023 school year, per PEN America's research, 48% of banned books covered topics of violence, physical abuse, or sexual assault; 30% of banned books included characters of color and themes of race and racism; 30% of banned books represented LGBTQIA+ identities; and 6% of banned books included a transgender character; and

Whereas, In New York State alone, the ALA recorded 19 attempts to restrict access to books and 45

titles challenged in those attempts, including “Gender Queer” by Maia Kobabe, “Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda” by J.P. Stassen, “People Kill People,” by Ellen Hopkins, “It Ends With Us,” by Colleen Hoover, and “All Boys Aren’t Blue,” by George M. Johnson; and

Whereas, Once a book has been challenged, it often must be removed from library shelves and classrooms until a lengthy review process is completed; and

Whereas, The removal and review of challenged books can take considerable time from school educators and administrators or must be outsourced to third-party companies, which USA Today has reported is costing school districts thousands of dollars annually in addition to fees associated with retaining legal representation and expert advice sometimes needed to fight off a challenge; and

Whereas, Schools that are already struggling to manage day-to-day operations and responsibilities due to lack of funds and staff do not have the capacity or resources to take on book challenges; and

Whereas, The National Center for Education Statistics reported that as of October 2022, 44% of public schools were operating without a full-time teaching staff; and

Whereas, In New York City, teacher attrition has doubled since 2019 according to reporting from Chalkbeat; and

Whereas, New York City schools are also facing additional budget cuts in the coming fiscal year which would make fighting any book challenges a considerable financial burden; and

Whereas, H.R.6592, the “Fight Book Bans Act,” introduced by U.S. Representative Maxwell Frost, would enable the United States Department of Education (DoE) to provide grants of up to \$100,000 to cover the costs associated with book challenges; and

Whereas, These grants would offer financial relief to schools and school districts, making it possible for them to prioritize fighting book challenges without sacrificing limited resources; and

Whereas, Dedicated school funding for the costs associated with book challenges is a critical tool in combatting the growing threat of censorship associated with book bans; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to Sign, H.R.6592, the Fight Book Bans Act.

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