



# STRONG LIBRARIES = A STRONGER MICHIGAN

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## MICHIGAN LIBRARY ADVOCACY DAY



TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024 MICHIGAN STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

## FACT SHEET – Freedom to Read Legislation

Viewed as an integral component of a democratic society and guaranteed by the First Amendment of the US Constitution, intellectual freedom protects an individual's right to access, explore, consider, and express ideas and information and forms the basis for a self-governing, well-informed citizenry.

Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession and puts librarians, library workers and library trustees, front and center to protect Michiganders' right to read. While censorship is nothing new, for the past two years, Michigan libraries have been addressing an unprecedented volume of formal and informal actions to ban, hide, destroy, weed, move and challenge books in our libraries – which ultimately leads to restrictions on access to information. Further, there have been several instances of threats and harassment to librarians across Michigan for simply doing their duty to serve everyone in their communities. One county prosecutor even threatened litigation against his local library director.

Individuals have the right and responsibility to make decisions about what materials are suitable for themselves and for their own children. But no one individual or group should make sweeping decisions that take that process of careful consideration away from the experts and that choice away from readers. We oppose any attempt to force the public library to serve as a child's co-parent by making everything in the collection suitable for only one individual or group.

The overwhelming majority of Michigan voters oppose book banning. In March 2023 and November 2023, the Michigan Library Association contracted with EPIC-MRA, who collected over 800 opinions on this very topic from voters in Michigan. In this statistically valid poll, an 86% majority of respondents (76% strongly) would "support state legislation that would protect the right of the public to read what they wish to read in local public libraries and not have books banned."

The Michigan Library Association has drafted model legislation that is ready for introduction in response to requests from librarians across the state and the results of the voter survey. The legislation would: 1) protect citizen's rights to receive and express diverse ideas without censorship, and 2) put to rest baseless challenges targeting authors or the subject matter, content, or viewpoint of material.

**ASK: We strongly urge Michigan legislators to introduce, co-sponsor and adopt the Freedom to Read Act as proposed by the Michigan Library Association.**