

**NATIONAL
COALITION
AGAINST
CENSORSHIP** **KIDS'
RIGHT
TO READ**

September 2, 2022

Board of Education
Norman Public Schools
131 South Flood Avenue,
Norman, OK 73069

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers and staff. We are writing in response to news reports that Summer Boismier, an English teacher at Norman High School, was admonished for sharing a digital library resource with her students. We do not know whether those reports are entirely accurate, but we are concerned that the district might erroneously believe that Oklahoma HB 1775 forbids teachers from recommending certain books to their students. We ask you to confirm that this is not the case, and to ensure that district employees understand the limited scope of the law.

We understand that Oklahoma HB 1775 has put school districts under heavy pressure and they may choose to censor resources out of an abundance of caution, so we ask the district to take steps to ensure that students, parents and staff understand the limits of that law. HB 1775 states only that teachers cannot "require or make a part of any course" certain ideas. It leaves teachers free to recommend books or other resources to curious students, particularly those shared by a public library, which the teacher has deemed valuable using their professional judgment.

Moreover, the district, in its *Mission, Vision and Values*, affirms that it "collaborate[s] with internal and external stakeholders to maximize our shared knowledge and resources to bring greater value to our students, staff and stakeholders." Additionally, Oklahoma's state Academic Standards for Social Studies provides that students should be trained to engage in "independent inquiry," and the state's Academic Standards for Science ask students to "[e]ngage in investigations based on curiosity and wondering about the physical and natural world." Admonishing a teacher for sharing resources with students directly contradicts those goals.

Therefore, we call upon the district to publicly clarify the scope of HB 1775, and to reaffirm its commitments to student intellectual growth and creating "good citizens who are prepared to be engaged members of the community" as mandated by the district's mission statement.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Finan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
The Authors Guild
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
National Council of Teachers of English
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

A project of the National
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