

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

July 26, 2023

Board of Education
New Hanover County Schools
6410 Carolina Beach Road
Wilmington, NC 28412

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 to urge you to reject the pending challenge to Jason Reynolds' and Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You*.

We are informed that at an upcoming public hearing, the board will consider the challenge to *Stamped*. Although the original challenge only concerned the use of the book in Ashley High School's AP Language and Composition course, we understand that the district may also be considering its removal from school libraries.

Removing *Stamped* from school libraries would violate the First Amendment. The challenge was filed because the complainant disagrees with the book's "perspective on American History." As you know, the Supreme Court has warned that "school boards may not remove books from library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books" *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 872 (1982) (plurality opinion). In 2021, the Court reaffirmed the principle underlying *Pico*, stating that public schools have a responsibility to protect unpopular ideas. *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B. L.*, 594 U.S. ___, 141 S. Ct. 2038, 2046 (2021). Therefore, removing the book from the library would violate established First Amendment precedent.

In regard to *Stamped*'s inclusion in the AP course, Board Policy Code 3200 states that supplementary curricular materials should "provide resources representing various points of view on controversial issues so that students as young citizens may develop, under guidance, the skills of critical thinking and critical analysis." Therefore, removing *Stamped* due to disagreement with its views would be contrary to board policy.

Therefore, we urge you to retain the book as recommended by both reconsideration committees which have previously reviewed and rejected the complaint.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,



Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

CC: Superintendent Dr. Charles Foust

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
The Authors Guild
Children's and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America
National Council of Teachers of English

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