

Questions for the Record for Dr. Jonathan Friedman

Committee on Education and the Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee Hearing: “Protecting Kids: Combating Graphic, Explicit Content in School Libraries” Thursday, October 19, 2023 10:15 a.m.

Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA)

1. The Bible can be found in many school libraries. While it is a foundational religious text, it may also be read for its literary merit, historical significance, and role in comparative religious studies. And yet, it contains numerous sexually explicit passages.
 - a. Are the same individuals or groups that are leading the charge in the recent resurgence of book bans including the Bible on their lists of books to ban based on content?
 - b. What happened in the instances when the Bible has been challenged?
 - c. What lessons about context can we learn from the continued presence of the Bible in school library collections?

Representative Gregorio Kili Camacho Sablan (D-Northern Mariana Islands)

1. **School Climate-Impact of Book Bans on Fostering Positive Diversity:** Today, elementary and secondary schools are comprised of diverse students, teachers, and staff, and a positive school climate is critical for student success. To support this diversity, schools and districts are increasingly working to improve school climate to create a positive learning environment that benefits all students.
 - a. Mr. Friedman, how do book bans impact this effort?
 - b. Is there a benefit to students having a broad range of books that reflect the diversity that is seen in our nation today?

Representative Frederica Wilson (D-FL)

1. According to PEN America’s reports, the number of book bans has grown significantly in the last couple of years.
 - a. In your research, have you found that this can be attributed to a specific reason or phenomenon? Are more individual parents simply speaking out today than before or are new groups, such as Moms for Liberty, playing a role in this?

Representative Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA)

1. The books that are appropriate for kindergartners will understandably not be the same as those appropriate for fifth graders, for example, and yet both age groups are found in most elementary schools. And the books appropriate for fifth graders differ from those appropriate for eighth graders, which differ from those appropriate for twelfth graders, etc.
 - a. What role, if any, does age appropriateness play in determining what books should be available in school libraries?

Representative Jamaal Bowman (D-NY)

Questions for Dr. Jonathan Friedman

1. **Actual Content of the Books Being Banned:** The title of today’s hearing is “Protecting Kids: Combating Graphic, Explicit Content in School Libraries.” At the same time, some of the books being challenged and banned for containing graphic and/or explicit content are intended for very young children or are books that do not contain graphic or explicit content at all.
 - a. Can you provide examples of the books being banned and what is the actual content of these books?
2. **School Climate-Impact of Book Bans on Marginalized Students:** Research shows that it is more difficult to learn when students feel scared, alienated, or misunderstood.
 - a. Can book bans create or exacerbate a hostile school climate for LGBTQ+ students, Black and brown students, and other marginalized students? How so?