



Great Public Schools
for Every Student

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April 6, 2022

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Reform
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association, who teach and support 50 million students in 14,000 communities, we thank the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties for holding this hearing, “Free Speech Under Attack: Book Bans and Academic Censorship.” We offer these comments for the record.

Educators are devoted to nurturing their students’ growth and development and encouraging them to be curious, ask questions, and cultivate open-mindedness. These traits make learning possible, and they cannot develop in an atmosphere of book banning and censorship. Additionally, learning the good as well as the bad about our history not only helps us prevent the mistakes of the past, but also brings us together based on shared values. We will not always agree on how to interpret history or specific milestones, but students should always *know* our history. Whitewashing it only breeds shame and robs us of the ability to celebrate our many achievements.

Parents understand this. No matter where they land on the political spectrum, they want their children to thrive and “live into their brilliance.” This cannot happen without a broad education and exposure to a variety of books and other resources—and without schools that are fully staffed with passionate, devoted educators—that encourage students to fearlessly seek out and analyze information.

In every community, parents and the public are demanding that elected leaders focus on providing all students with what they need for the best education possible. We must deal with the many serious challenges our schools face, such as the severe shortage of teachers, counselors, librarians, and other educators and staff, the mental-health crisis among students, and the lack of resources that leaves many students without the learning materials and support they deserve. These issues worsened during the pandemic. Unless Congress, policymakers, parents, and educators work together on solutions, the problems we face will undoubtedly worsen.

Again, we thank you for this opportunity to submit comments for the record and look forward to working with you on the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

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

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association