Over 1,300 Children’s and YA Authors Condemn Book Banning

May 17, 2022

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

Dear Representatives Raskin and Mace,

We, the undersigned, authors and illustrators of books for children and teens, condemn the efforts by organized groups to purge books from our nation’s schools. Our concern is not for the books themselves, but for the children, families, and communities who are caught in the crosshairs of these campaigns.

This current wave of book suppression follows hard-won gains made by authors whose voices have long been underrepresented in publishing. Just ten years ago, less than seven percent of children’s books featured characters who were Black, Indigenous, or people of color (source: Cooperative Children’s Book Center). Representation is finally increasing thanks to the work of groups like We Need Diverse Books. The current banning efforts are part of a strong and purposeful backlash against books written by BIPOC authors. Books with characters who are LGBTQIA+ have been vehemently targeted and frequently misrepresented.

When books are removed or flagged as inappropriate, it sends the message that the people in them are somehow inappropriate. It is a dehumanizing form of erasure. Every reader deserves to see themselves and their families positively represented in the books in their schools. These books are important for all children. Reading stories that reflect the diversity of our world builds empathy and respect for everyone’s humanity. At a time when our country is experiencing an alarming rise in hate crimes, we should be searching for ways to increase empathy and compassion at every turn.

A particularly insidious feature of the current attacks is the flood of accusations that anyone who seeks to give readers access to diverse books is a “groomer,” “radical,” or “pedophile.” These charges are abhorrent and without merit, and they have been leveled against not only authors, but against teachers and librarians. We strongly condemn this slander against our colleagues and our nation’s educators.

A book may not be for every student, but—as we know from the many letters we receive from young readers—a single book can matter deeply to an individual student. Nearly all campuses have an existing system to handle a parent’s concern with their own child’s reading material. Pro-censorship groups seek to overwhelm these systems by pressuring schools to pull entire lists of books from shelves “for review.” Some extremists have intimidated authors, educators, and school board members online and even threatened them with violence. This has created an atmosphere of fear that has led to “soft censorship” in many districts. Books are quietly removed or never purchased at all. Authors are never invited to speak, for fear of drawing the wrath of these groups.
Libraries are bastions of the First Amendment. They provide equal access to a wealth of knowledge and ideas for all public school students. When individuals and organizations seek to advance their own political agendas or personal beliefs by censoring books, they infringe upon students’ constitutional rights.

We call upon Congress, statehouses, and school boards to reject the political manipulation of our schools, to uphold the values of freedom and equality promised in the Constitution, and to protect the rights of all young people to access the books they need and deserve.

Signed,

Judy Blume
Lois Lowry
Christina Soontornvat
Ellen Oh
Phil Bildner
Alex London
Dhonielle Clayton
Gordon Korman
Karina Yan Glaser
James Ponti
Minh Lê
Linda Sue Park
Nic Stone
Hena Khan
Katherine Paterson
Sarah Mlynowski
Meg Medina
Gregory Maguire
Stuart Gibbs
Julie Buxbaum
KA Holt
Juana Martinez-Neal
Nikki Grimes
Max Brallier
Samira Ahmed
Jim Averbeck
Louise Hawes
Rose Brock
Mary Brigid Barrett
Kyle Lukoff
Erika T. Wurth
Kate Hart
Andrea L. Rogers
Traci Sorell
Brian Young
Erin Entrada Kelly
Kathi Appelt
LeUyen Pham
Nisha Sharma
Debbie Reese
Kevin Maillard
Rick Riordan
Jacqueline Woodson
Cynthia Leitich Smith
Mo Willems
Jason Reynolds
Jeff Kinney
John Green
Raina Telgemeier
Tiffany D. Jackson
Mayra Cuevas
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Bethany Hegedus
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Jason June
Tim Tingle
Jo Whittemore
ilene Wong Gregorio
Dawn Quigley
Supriya Kelkar
Jen Calonita
Jasmine Warga
Ronald L. Smith
Victoria Aveyard
Rajani LaRocca
Jennifer Ziegler
Nicholas Silas
Nidhi Chanani
Kami Garcia
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Gale Galligan
Angie Thomas
Dave Pilkey
Kate DiCamillo
Kwame Alexander
Avi
Jerry Craft
Dan Santat
Hope Larson
Varian Johnson
Romina Garber
Mariana Baer
Padma Venkatraman
Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich
Julie Murphy
Denise K. Lajimodiere
Laurie Devore
Soman Chainani
Jamie Lee Curtis
Mac Barnett
Megan Frazer Blakemore
Malinda Lo
Alex Segura
Kelly Yang
Naomi Milliner
Tracey Baptiste
Jon Scieszka
Veronica Roth
Shing Yin Khor
Supriya Kelkar
Shaenon K. Garrity
Alex Gino
Malaya Evans
Marie Lu
Laurel Goodluck
Randi Ribay
Courtney Summers
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Libba Bray
Maulik Pancholy
Lin Oliver
Children’s and YA Authors and Illustrators Condemn Book Banning

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Anne Wynter
Jessica Patrick
Kayla Cagan
Sara Ryan
Amy Spalding
Jordan Sonnenblick
Alexandria Giardino
Cory Putman Oakes
K-Fai Steele
Amy Novesky
Sayantani DasGupta
Erin Soderberg Downing
Donna Barba Higuera
David Bowles
Sarah Darer Littman
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Thyra Heder
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Janae Marks
Kip Wilson
Meredith Davis
Bethanie Murguia
Aisha Saeed
Cecil Castellucci
Fran Manushkin
Raphael Simon (aka Pseudonymous Bosch)
Carrie Jones
Pat Miller
Katie Bayerl
Misa Saburi
Matt McMann
Maurene Goo
Brendan Reichs
Kaitlin Ward
Andrew Farago
Chris Grabenstein
Edward Underhill
Tracy López
William Alexander
P. C. Cast
Preeti Chhibber
Gayle Forman
Priyanka Taslim
Lyn Miller-Lachmann
Kate Messner
Robin Stevenson
Stephanie S. Tolan
Margarita Engle
Mike Jung
Casey W. Robinson
Deva Fagan
Adam Gidwitz
Jenna Miller
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Natasha Donovan
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Isi Hendrix
Evan Turk
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Megan Reyes
Kim Rogers
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Alyssa Colman
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Mike Wu
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Katey Howes
Jacci Turner
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Maya Prasad
Benson Shum
Lisze Bechtold
Zara González Hoang
Jess Brallier
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Zetta Elliott
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Gaby D’Alessandro
Annie Silvestro
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Megan Bannen
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Jamie Sumner
Veronica Rossi
Becky Herzog
Peter Pearson
Reggie Brown
Jennie Palmer
Victoria J Coe
She Ganz-Schmitt
Wade Hudson
Lillian Rivera
Kim Smekal
Nina Victor Crittenden
Tim McCanna
Joan Broerman
Sarah Plotzker
Kati Gardner
Sarah Henning
Jaime Berry
Lisa Schmid
Susan Muaddi Darraj
Aya Khalil
Lauren Paige Conrad
Anne Key
Zeena M. Pliska
Maleeha Siddiqui
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Peter Arenstam
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Tammi Sauer
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Sara K Joiner
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Amy Wachspress
Brizida Magro
Sarah Raughley
Sarah & Ian Hoffman
Morgan Matson
Kristen Balouch
Sheetal Sheth
Janice Chiang
Kristy Acevedo
Sara Pennypacker
Julie Hedlund
Lindsay Leslie
Melissa de la Cruz
Nancy Werlin
Bonny Becker
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Deborah Halverson
Icy Smith
Haydee Zayas-Ramos
Nazareth Hidalgo Lobo
Esmeralda Santiago
Angelica Shirley Carpenter
Patricia Newman
Paula Yoo
Christina Francine
kevan atteberry
Jean Reagan
Ellen Wittlinger
Laya Steinberg
Francisco Jiménez
Bruce Coville
Theo Baker
Sarah Dessen
Krystal Quiles
Nelly Buchet
Mike Grosso
David Levithan
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Lynn Fulton
Christy Webster
James McGowan
Jon Klassen
Jesse Klausmeier
Genevieve Godbout
Christopher Weyant
Stephen Bramucci
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<td>Alison Green Myers                                      Carrie Ryan</td>
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<td>Michal Babay                                             J. Kasper Kramer</td>
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<td>April Halprin Wayland                                    Shiko Pate</td>
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<td>Alexandra Thompson                                       Jody Casella</td>
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<td>Robin Preiss Glasser                                     Rebecca Barnhouse</td>
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<td>Sheryl Murray                                            Andre R. Frattino</td>
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<td>Will Hobbs                                               Maia Kobabe</td>
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<td>Jody Casella                                             David Elliott</td>
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<td>Abby Hanlon                                               Laila Sabreen</td>
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<td>Cozbi A Cabrera                                          Kathleen Ahrens</td>
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<td>Kianny N. Antigua                                        Landra Jennings</td>
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<td>Olivia de Castro                                         Abby Hanlon</td>
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<td>Marcia Argueta Mickelson                                 Ken Daley</td>
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<td>Josh Funk                                                DeAndra Hodge</td>
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<td>Liz Starin                                               Nneka Myers</td>
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<td>DeAndra Hodge                                            Ted Enik</td>
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<td>Nneka Myers                                              Ariel Bernstein</td>
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<td>Rachel Cohn                                               Rachel Cohn</td>
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<td>Sili Recio                                               Gabi Snyder</td>
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<td>Boya Sun                                                 Pat Redding Scanlon</td>
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<td>Gabri Snyder                                             Naomi Danis</td>
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<td>Pat Redding Scanlon                                       Bruce Hale</td>
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<td>Naomi Danis                                              James Serafino</td>
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<td>Robbin Herrera                                           Holly Schindler</td>
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<td>Rachelle Burk                                            Court Stevens</td>
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<td>Andria Warmflash Rosenbaum                               Andria Warmflash Rosenbaum</td>
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<td>Jacqueline Preiss Weitzman                               Lizz Brady</td>
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<td>Kell Andrews                                             Kell Andrews</td>
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<td>Tad Hills                                                Tad Hills</td>
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<td>Ari Tison                                                Sabrina Kleckner</td>
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