

## ALLA Statement on HB 401

Alabama's libraries are an essential part of Alabama communities. Library professionals strive to provide a welcoming environment where patrons can comfortably access materials, services, and programming relevant to the community for research, education, and enjoyment. Events are not chosen at random, but instead, are carefully curated to represent the varied perspectives and experiences of the communities they serve.

The Alabama Library Association (ALLA) opposes efforts that limit access to information, ideas, or programs that patrons wish to explore. Alabama librarians stand up for free speech for all. To this end, we welcome feedback from our community and will respond with courtesy and respect to concerns and suggestions. Parents are important stakeholders in library programs and services, and we invite concerned parents to engage with librarians and have civil discussions about proposed programs. ALLA fully supports the right of parents to determine what their child reads and select alternative reading or instructional materials for their child.

Furthermore, a vast majority of parents trust their librarians. Non-partisan research<sup>1</sup> shows that:

- 94% of parents say libraries are very important or important for their children
- 97% of parents say it's important that libraries offer programs and classes for children/teens
- 81% say a major reason libraries are important is that they provide their children with information and resources not available at home
- 71% say a major reason libraries are important is that libraries are a safe place for children

Attendance at library events is optional depending on family availability and interest. This leaves the decision about whether a child attends any type of library event squarely up to the parent, as it should be. We affirm parents' rights to decide what is right and appropriate for their child. Likewise, this means that one parent shouldn't be permitted to decide what is right for other children. We hope that you will agree that every parent has the right to decide on their children's extracurricular activities. HB401 would restrict the rights of parents to make those choices for themselves and their families, as they regularly do with television, film, and music content.

ALLA urges our communities and lawmakers to carefully consider HB401. Librarians are public servants, and must remain politically impartial as to not appear to use their public position to forward the interests of a specific political party or candidate. In order to maintain this impartial position in the selection of our materials and our programs, we respectfully ask that officials trust in the education, skills, and experience of librarians to work with parents and stakeholders in the communities we serve to provide the best services and programs for the diverse public we represent.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Alabama Library Association

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center (2013). Parents, Children, Libraries, and Reading.  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2013/05/01/parents-children-libraries-and-reading-3>