



October 27, 2023

Mr. Derek Dunlea & Ms. Gabrielle Hanson
Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Mr. Dunlea and Ms. Hanson,

On behalf of the Cambridge Public Library Foundation, I am writing in full support of *H.4005: An Act Ensuring Freedom to Read* and *S.2447: An Act Protecting Against Attempt to Ban, Remove, or Restrict Library Access to Materials*. Book challenges are an affront to patrons' freedom to read. The Cambridge Public Library strongly supports individuals' rights to choose what they read for themselves, and we at the Foundation stand behind them.

The Library serves a diverse community of patrons, ranging from children (who at five are entitled to their own library card and the right to privacy that comes with it) to the high schoolers from the neighboring school who frequent the Teen Room and The Hive makerspace; to older adults who benefit from "Creative Aging" workshops and community built through wellness classes, and many more in between. Each of these patrons is impacted by challenges to the freedom to read. Every book challenged takes away an opportunity for a community member to learn something new—about themselves or about someone different from them.

When we take those learning opportunities away from people—especially children and teens—we diminish their ability to practice critical thinking and civic engagement. The Library believes that the responsibility of selecting reading materials lies solely with the individual. Librarians work hard to develop comprehensive collection policies to provide patrons with a variety of options, but the freedom to choose from our collections should remain with the patron. Library professionals understand that not every book is right for every reader, and they work with our patrons to identify materials that match their interests and reading level.

The Library is a vital hub, convener, and source of support for the entire community. Books bans and challenges endanger the Library's capacity to provide necessary resources, programs, and knowledge to patrons. I urge you to stand with libraries, readers, and intellectual freedom by passing bills H.4005 and S.2447. Championing the freedom to read and protecting against book bans are crucial steps to ensuring that Massachusetts libraries can continue to serve their patrons and that Massachusetts resident can exercise their freedom to read. Thank you for working to protect that freedom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Flaim", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kate Flaim
President, Board of Directors
Cambridge Public Library Foundation