



## **Book Banning: Sample Letter Against Censorship in Schools and Libraries + Who to Contact**

- **Who is this for?**
  - This is aimed at authors in the LGBTQWIS program with books currently being challenged and/or banned in schools and libraries across the country. From there, these authors can disseminate this information to other authors impacted by the book challenges and bannings.
- **What is it?**
  - A letter template to send to schools, libraries, and elected officials when challenges/bannings arise
  - Information for where to find the relevant people to contact
- **When do I use it?**
  - As needed when books are banned/challenged
- **Where do I send it?**
  - [Find your representative](#)
  - [PEN America's Index of School Book Bans](#)
    - Find the author name and book title using this document (Command/CTRL F to easily search)
    - Find out the school district name(s) and state(s) where the book is being banned/challenged
    - Search the school, district name, and state in google to find the district information
      - Look up in staff directory: school administrators, superintendents, library services, curriculum and instruction personnel
    - Use the sample letter as a template, attach in email to the pertinent personnel
- **Why we made this**
  - This template is to assist authors in the work of fighting back when their or their peer's books are banned. Its aim is to make clear the importance of representation in literature and the harmful effects of pulling literature from the shelves.

Dear [Name]:

It has come to my attention that [Book Title by author] has recently been challenged in your [district/school/library/community] for [this reason]. I strongly urge you to keep this book in [the curriculum/in rotation in the library] to uphold the right of all young people in our community to read. Removing these books from your shelf that are so often the stories of LGBTQ+\* and BIPOC\*\* authors infers to young people that they cannot be exposed to these communities. It criminalizes the identities of the people writing these books as well as the young people who share these identities.

Books that contain topics that are often uncomfortable to read and difficult to imagine are at the root of these challenges. In censoring these stories, you are suppressing young people's chances to be affirmed in their own uncomfortable and difficult life experiences. You are disregarding young people's ability to see themselves reflected in the stories they read. You are denying the chance for young people to build empathy for experiences outside of their own. When [86% of LGBTQ+ students report](#) being harassed or assaulted at school and [2 in 5 LGBTQ+ students of color report](#) being bullied or harassed based on their ethnicity, this is your call to action to keep these stories accessible for all.

Further, in banning these books, you are suppressing young people's ability to engage in difficult discourse, for fear of "inappropriateness" or "offensiveness". This teaches young people that the way to handle these topics is to avoid them. Oftentimes, young people cannot avoid these topics because they are the ones living these topics. And for those who do not share the experiences of these stories, the safest way for them to engage with these topics is through literature.

I am writing to urge your support as we strive to protect all children's and teens' rights to read as well as the rights and livelihood of the authors who are affected by this challenge. The protection of free expression and the right for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC young people to see themselves represented in their libraries is of the utmost importance. I ask that you consider this when these challenges arise. I therefore urge you to ensure that [district name] policies are followed and that [book title] [remains in/is restored to] the [school's curriculum/library name].

Sincerely,

[Name]

\*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and all emerging identities

\*\*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color