

April 8, 2026

Honorable members of the House Education Policy and Administration Committee,

On behalf of the American Booksellers Association (ABA) and the 25 independent bookstores we represent in New Hampshire, I write to urge you to oppose SB 434. In addition to the unrestrained censorship and inequity it will cause in New Hampshire schools, it will jeopardize the next generation of engaged readers, and with them, the future of bookselling.

SB 434 says that it restricts student access to “harmful” material, but as written it would censor a much broader range of books in arbitrary and subjective ways. School principals or another “designee” (without limits) are empowered to remove books based on a single complaint if they decide it is merely “offensive” or “inappropriate.” These terms are not defined in the bill and are so vague as to be undefinable. While there is an appeal process, the bill only guarantees the right of appeal to the *complainant*. If a parent believes taxpayer-funded reading materials in their child’s library have been improperly removed, they have no guaranteed right to appeal. Absurd and censorial scenarios are not only possible, but likely as a result of SB 434. Anyone designated by a school principal, apparently including complainants themselves, can decide what is “offensive” based solely on their own biases and beliefs.

Other states following this path, like Texas and Idaho, have discovered that when they pass vaguely worded censorship bills, fear of liability forces schools to close libraries or restrict access. Even if this does not happen or only happens temporarily, the literacy organization First Book has found that 72% of educators see engagement with reading suffering as a result of book bans. This endangers the next generation of readers.

Independent bookstores, the definition of Main Street businesses who create jobs and provide free programming in their communities, depend on that next generation of readers. They also face harassment, disruptive protests, and even threats of violence at increased levels based on misinformation about “harmful” books.

New Hampshire can choose a different path for its students, parents, and small businesses, and it must. Please oppose this bill.

Sincerely,  
Philomena Polefrone  
Associate Director of Advocacy  
American Booksellers Association