

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2023-1122

TITLE: Resolution Condemning Florida House Bill 1069 and the Censorship, Restriction, and Removal of Educational Resources from Florida Schools

AUTHOR(S): Senator Anghelo Gangano

SPONSOR(S): Majority Party Leader Simone Liang, Senator Raj Mia, Senator Bryan Garcia-Ramos, Senator Anamika Naidu, Senator Christian Rodriguez, Senator Chalisa Budhai, Senator Antonio Hendricks, Senator Cec Wood-Barron, Senator Colin Lasch, Senate President Pro Tempore Nathan McGinnis, Senator Hunter Monson, Senate President Oscar Santiago Perez

WHEREAS, on June 8th, 2023, President Joe Biden announced the appointment of a new point person at the Department of Education to address an increase in book bans [1]; and,

WHEREAS, the American Library Association reported in 2022 that the vast majority of voters (71%) oppose efforts to have books removed from their local public libraries, including a majority of Democrats (75%), independents (58%), and Republicans (70%) [2]; and,

WHEREAS, the American Library Association reported in 2022 that 75% of voters are confident in local public libraries to make good decisions about what books to include in their collections, and 74% of parents are confident in the public school libraries' decisions about their collections [2]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that during the first half of the 2022-23 school year, July to December, there were 1,477 recorded instances of individual books banned, affecting 874 unique titles, and increase of 28% compared to the prior six months [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that instances of book bans are most prevalent in Texas, Florida, Missouri, Utah, and South Carolina, and are driven by a confluence of local actors and state-level policy [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that within this six-month period, 30% of the unique titles banned are books about race, racism, or feature characters of color, and 26% of unique titles banned have LGBTQ+ characters or themes [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that book bans are increasingly affecting wider swaths of titles, including those that portray violence and abuse (44%), discuss topics of health and

wellbeing (38%), and cover death and grief (30%) [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that numerous states enacted “wholesale bans” in which entire classrooms and school libraries have been suspended, closed, or emptied of books, either permanently or temporarily, largely because teachers and librarians in several states have been directed to catalog entire collections for public scrutiny within short timeframes, under threat of punishment from new, vague laws [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that “wholesale bans” have involved the culling of books that were previously available to students, in ways that are impossible to track or quantify [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that within this six-month period, 10 of the 11 most banned books were written by women or non-binary individuals, with 4 being written by authors of color and four by LGBTQ+ individuals, identities historically underrepresented in publishing and in school libraries [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that within this six-month period, Florida had the most school districts (13) banning books, and second most instances of book bans (357), just behind Texas (438) [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that of the 1,477 reported book bans within this six-month period, 74% are connected to organized efforts, mainly of advocacy groups; elected officials; or enacted legislation (n=1,085) [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that of these advocacy groups, Moms for Liberty is connected to 58% of all advocacy-led book bans around the country, affecting school districts in North Dakota, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Florida [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that 25% (n=372) of these organized book bans were connected to political pressure from elected or appointed individuals [3]; and,

WHEREAS, PEN America reported that 31% (n=461) of these organized book bans were connected to newly enacted state laws in Florida, Utah, and Missouri, these include laws that contain direct prohibitions on certain content in schools, specify new rules about how books need to be cataloged or new conditions under which they can be accessed, or threaten punishment for teachers, librarians and administrators if they provide students access to material deemed “harmful” or “explicit” [3]; and,

WHEREAS, Florida House Bill 1557 the “Parental Rights in Education Act” bars classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, and in older grades, these topics must be delivered in an “age appropriate” or “developmentally appropriate” way, and only “in accordance with state standards” [4]; and,

WHEREAS, Florida House Bill 7 the “Stop W.O.K.E Act” prohibits teaching someone that they must feel guilt or psychological distress on account of their race or sex, similar to educational gag orders with lists of “divisive concepts” [5]; and,

WHEREAS, Florida House Bill 1467 mandates that schools maintain online databases of every book in their collections “in a searchable format”, and that these books must be determined not to contain pornography or material deemed harmful to minors, according to a librarian or media specialist, and stipulates that parents can challenge any of these materials, to petition to have them removed from school [6]; and,

WHEREAS, the largest publishing group in the U.S. Penguin Random House, and several authors, students, and parents of students, have filed multiple lawsuits against school districts throughout the state of Florida citing said book bans violate constitutional rights to free speech and equal protection under the law, and said removals disproportionately affect books that address racism and LGBTQ relationships [7]; [8]; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that the overwhelming majority of voters are opposed to book bans and trust their public education institutions to provide educational material for students.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that there is a rise of book bans across the nation in recent years, with the state of Florida being at the forefront of the practice.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that said book bans are disproportionately targeting books dealing with characters of color and heteronormative sexualities, as well as authors who are women or non-binary, of minority descent, or are members of the LGBTQ+ community.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes that the overwhelming number of book bans are formulated in organized fashion by a small minority of individuals.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes several newly written pieces of legislation have made it easier for small groups or even single individuals to facilitate book bans across entire counties in the state of Florida with little to no evidence or resistance due to the threat of persecution of librarians and teachers.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate stands in solidarity with authors, students, and educators, in the fight for freedom of speech and pursuit of knowledge which book bans seek to destroy.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student

Senate celebrates and cherishes the diverse identities, experiences, and views present in literature found throughout all academic institutions, and condemns the suppression of this shared knowledge.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate condemns actions and legislation that would censor, restrict, or remove educational resources from any academic institution, and denounces the environment of fear and intimidation such policies create.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to University President Dr. Ben Sasse, Graduate Assistants United Co-Presidents Bryn Taylor and Eva Garcia Ferres, Governor Ron DeSantis, Secretary of State Cord Byrd, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Paul Renner, Florida Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, Board of Trustees Members Morteza Hosseini, David L. Brandon, Richard P. Cole, Christopher T. Corr, Olivia E. Green, James W. Heavener, Daniel T. O'Keefe, Rahul Patel, Danaya Wright, Marsha D. Powers, Fred S. Ridley, Patrick O. Zalupski, Anita G. Zucker, Interim Provost Scott Angle, Vice President of Student Life Heather White, Vice President of Enrollment Management and Associate Provost Mary Parker, Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Advisor to the President Marsha McGriff, Vice President and General Counsel Amy Hass, Vice President of Government and Community Relations and University Secretary Mark Kaplan, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Charles Lane, Vice President of Business Affairs Curtis Reynolds, Vice President and Chief Information Officer Elias Eldayrie, Vice President of Human Resource Services Melissa Curry, Chair of the Florida Board of Governors Brian Lamb, Vice-Chair of the Florida Board of Governors Eric Silagy, Florida Board of Governors Members Timothy M. Cerio, Manny Diaz Jr., Aubrey Edge, Patricia Frost, Edward Haddock, Ken Jones, Darlene Luccio Jordan, Alan Levine, Charles H. Lydecker, Craig Mateer, Deanna Michael, Jose R. Oliva, Steven M. Scott, Florida State University Student Body President Jack Hitchcock, Florida International University Student Body President Alexander P. Sutton, University of South Florida Student Body President Nithin Palyam, Florida Atlantic University Student Body President Pierce Kennamer, University of Central Florida Student Body President Brandon Greenaway, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Student Body President Londe Mondelus, Florida Gulf Coast University Student Body President Emory Cavin, University of North Florida Student Body President John Grosso, New College of Florida Student Body President Grace Keenan, Florida Polytechnic University Student Body President Melia Rodriguez, and University of West Florida Student Body President Ariauna Range.

[1]:<https://www.npr.org/2023/06/08/1180941627/biden-pride-month-book-bans>

[2]:<https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2022/03/large-majorities-voters-oppose-book-bans-and-have-confidence-libraries>

[3]:<https://pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/>

[4]:<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/1557>

[5]:<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/7>

[6]:<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/1467>

[7]:<https://www.npr.org/2023/05/18/1176879171/florida-book-ban-lawsuit>

[8]:<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/20/books/book-bans-florida-tango-makes-three.html>

 8/11

Oscar Santiago Perez
Senate President

Date