For immediate release on May 24th 2022
RE: Solana Beach School District Soft Ban on School Books

Point of Contacts:
Max Disposti – North County LGBTQ Resource Center 760-994-1690
Amanda Nelson- SD Pride 619-297-7683 x112

Statement Opposing Solana School District’s Soft Ban on School Books: Our Families Aren’t Hiding in a Closet or Behind a Desk

The North County LGBTQ Resource Center along with the many organization** signatory of this statement are expressing disappointment about the actions taken by the Solana Beach School District and request a meeting with the representative of the district to discuss, review, and hopefully address these concerns.

Library books featuring LGBTQIA+ themes and characters are under attack across the United States with the introduction of policies and procedures censoring and surveilling students. These assaults on Free Speech have found a home here in San Diego County.

The Solana Beach School District Board has voted to make it easier to advance censorship and surveillance of students (From April 2022: https://www.delmartimes.net/news/story/2022-04-20/solana-beach-school-district-approves-library-plan)

Despite rhetoric to “recognize the contributions of people from a variety of groups,” the Solana Beach School District advanced policies which restrict, limit, and delay students’ access to diverse materials, including gender-affirming books.

As updated on April 14, 2022, the Board adopted amendments to the District’s “Selection, Reconsideration, and Maintenance Plan for School Libraries.” It creates new, separate bookshelves for materials which they deem to be vaguely “instructive in nature, take a particular position on a debatable topic, or require additional adult facilitation.”

The District also adopted a new “Opt-Out” form that expands a Parent/Guardian’s ability to restrict their child from specific book titles or entire topics by instituting a new “Opt-Out” form. These restrictions don’t only impact individual students because the school’s policy is to “select an alternate text” when a “certain text is restricted for one or more students.”

For books on the shelves, librarians are supposed to “gently and discreetly redirect students” away from books they are individually banned from reading. This type of surveillance will foster mistrust, fear, and oppression.

While neutral in language, as applied to our students, these policies have the very real effect of erasing our families, history, and people from the classroom and library shelves.
Putting a library book behind the desk can be just as harmful as removing it entirely. The restriction makes it more difficult for students to access the library book and stigmatizes it as something dirty or shameful.

It is important for young people to have trusting relationships, a sense of purpose and belonging, and to learn and practice the skills needed to work toward their goals and contribute to their communities. When students have access to various books, perspectives, and opinions, they learn and practice empathy, perspective taking, and active listening to build deeper connections with one another.

Children come from all kinds of families. Families should be celebrated as part of the strength of our diversity. LGBTQIA+ students and children with same-sex parents, trans parents, or guardians who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community attend schools across the country – including across the Solana Beach School District.

The District’s actions are not only limiting but insulting to the very youth they purport to protect. Worse yet, for LGBTQIA+ students, these actions place them at higher risk of suicide because of how mistreated and stigmatized their very existence is, including now in their own school libraries.

This is not an isolated attack. Nationally, state lawmakers are moving on even more explicit book bans targeting the LGBTQIA+ community and BIPOC authors and experiences. Locally, we have already seen racial and homophobic slurs spray-painted at San Dieguito High School Academy. We witnessed organized opposition to the Chula Vista public library’s Drag Queen Story Hour.

At a time when our youth are bullied and suffer from depression, isolation, and social rejection at higher rates, LGBTQIA+ library books play a crucial role in educational efforts to encourage respect for differences.

We must speak out forcefully against any attempt to erase us from the library shelves because when they win, they endanger the future health and well-being of the country’s most critical resource: Our youth.

If you live in the Solana Beach School District, submit a “Student and Parent Recommendations for Library Media Center Materials” form encouraging the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ themed books and list specific titles, if comfortable.

**SIGNED BY:**

**ORGANIZATIONS:**

- North County LGBTQ Resource Center
- San Diego Pride
- ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties
- Diversionary Theatre
- TransFamily Support Services
- ADL San Diego
- Lambda Archives of San Diego
- Alliance San Diego
- Avellaka Program Rainbow of Truth Circle
- Art of Pride, a Program of San Diego Pride
- She Fest, a Program of San Diego Pride
- Pride Youth, a Program of San Diego Pride
• GLSEN San Diego County
• California Library Association
• PFLAG San Diego County
• Everylibrary

INDIVIDUALS:

Max Disposti
Executive Director
North County LGBTQ Resource Center

Jen LaBarbera
Director of Education & Advocacy
San Diego Pride

Benjamin C. Kennedy, M.Ed (he/him)
Youth Mentor, San Diego Pride
National Facilitator, HRC’s Welcoming Schools
PhD student researcher, UC San Diego

Skyler Sullivan
Director of Education & Outreach
Diversionary Theatre

Evan Johnson (they/them)
Community and Youth Programming Manager
TransFamily Support Services

Kelsey Greenberg Young (she/her)
Education Director
ADL San Diego

Kaitlyn Garrett
Youth Services Librarian

Wendy Yutig-Scott, Ed.S., NCSP
Nationally Certified School Psychologist

Atlas Alvarez (they/he)
Activist and advocate

Mick Rabin (he/him)
Resource Teacher

Caryn Hoffman (she, her)
MS, Educational Counseling
Gini Mann-Deibert  
Teacher

Lucio Lira  
Community College Counselor Coordinator

Ady Huertas (she/ella)  
Youth Librarian & Activist

Annalee Barnard (she/her)  
Youth Advocate

Joslyn Fellows (she/her)  
Library Assistant

Nancy Nguyen (she/her)  
Community Organizer

Maria Schembri (she/her)  
Administrator

Tori Mullenix Luna (she/ella)  
Youth Advocate

Joyce Gabiola (they/them)  
Head Archivist
**Lambda Archives of San Diego**

Dana Wiegand (she/they)  
Archivist
**Lambda Archives of San Diego**

Madison (MJ) Teater (she/they)  
CSUSM Graduate Student

Carrie Sanabria  
Youth Services Librarian

Gabrielle Garcia (they/he/she)  
Archival Project Assistant

Matt Morrow  
Executive Artistic Director
**Diversionary Theatre**

Rachel Miller (she/her)  
Certificated Educator and Youth Advocate

Sarah Diamond, M.Ed. (she/her/ella)  
Higher Education Professional and Youth Advocate
Summer Hellewell (she/her)
Certificated Educator and Youth Advocate

Judith Howell (she/her)
Community Organizer

Dr. David J. Miller
Retired college professor

Dr. Wallace Wong (He/Him)
Clinical psychologist

Cris Sotomayor
Program Coordinator & Advocate

Kelsey Zeran (she/her)
Certificated Educator and Youth Advocate

Yvette Beltran (She/her/ella)
Prevention & Community Engagement Specialist

Stephen Colón (he/him/his)
Nonprofit Director
Minister, United Church of Christ

Maria Al-Shamma (She/Her)
School Social Worker

Dr. Theodore Shifrin
Retired college professor

Andrew Picard (he/him)
Nonprofit Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Nicole Verdes (she/they)
Board President, Lambda Archives of San Diego

Peggy Ryan
Marketing Associate, Diversionary Theatre

Wendy Schlater, Program Director
Avellaka Program Rainbow of Truth Circle

Derrol Murphy (he/him)
Bar Manager
Clark Cabaret-Diversionary Theatre

Dave Mathisen (he/him)
Director of Operations
San Diego Pride
Einat Noiman (she/her)
Parent

Janet Sanford
Cybersecurity Technical Writer

Marisa Magaña, MD (she/her)
Parent of two children in SBSD

Raymond A. Brandes
Teacher
San Diego Unified School District

Tabitha Kohmescher (she/her)
Educator and Parent
San Diego Unified School District

Rosie Mann-Deibert (she/they)
Parent and Activist

Dennis Nicely, M.A. Retired School Psychologist
he/him/his
Parent, Grand parent, and Activist/Advocate
Co-Chair and PD Coordinator
GLSEN San Diego

Sherry Cohen-Richards (she/her)
Board Secretary, PFLAG San Diego County

Bridget Thomas-Mayhew
Library Clerk

Kevin Lee (he/him)
Chair
San Diego Queer APIMEDA Coalition

Miko Osada (she/her)
Youth Librarian

Louise Julig (she/her)
Newsletter Editor, PFLAG San Diego County

Chris Mok (he & they)
LGBTQ+ Community Leader

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