

**NATIONAL
COALITION
AGAINST
CENSORSHIP** **KIDS'
RIGHT
TO READ**

October 22, 2021

Board of Education
North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District
1445 State Route 31 South
Annandale, NJ 08801

Re: Challenge to library books

Dear Board members:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is a coalition of literary, artistic and educational organizations dedicated to promoting free expression. We are writing in regard to reports that the District is adjudicating a challenge to several award-winning library books, including Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, Jonathan Evison's *Lawn Boy*, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe, and *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson.

We are concerned because we understand that the review committee has begun meeting, despite the fact that no librarian has been appointed to the committee, in contravention of Board Regulation 9130, which requires that each such committee must include a library staff member. Strict adherence to book review procedures is necessary to ensure that the public has confidence that, when library books are challenged, "the principles of intellectual freedom, the right to access of materials and the integrity of the certificated library/media personnel [are] defended rather than the materials." (Board Regulation 2530).

That is particularly the case here where all of the books relate to LGBTQ+ themes, which can raise questions that the challenge is based on personal hostility to the content of the books, as opposed to their educational value.

Finally, New Jersey Title 18A, section 35-4.35 requires every district to "include instruction on the political, economic, and social contributions of . . . lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and transgender people,” which is inconsistent with the removal of large numbers of LGBTQ themed books from school libraries.

Therefore, we ask that the District pause the review committee’s work until a library staff member is appointed, and to clarify to all teachers, administrators and staff that administrative regulations must be followed when challenges are brought to learning materials.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely yours,



Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: The Authors Guild
 Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
 National Council of Teachers of English
 PEN America
 PEN Children’s and Young Adult Books committee
 Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

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