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November 10, 2023

TO: RAILS Board

FROM: Monica Harris, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Partner Organization for Unite Against Book Bans

In your packet you will find the agreement for signing on as a partner organization for Unite Against Book Bans. In keeping with our new procedure, this letter and request were reviewed by the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee at their November 9 meeting, and they approved a motion for the RAILS Board to review this request.

[Unite Against Books Bans](https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/partners/) is a national initiative “to empower readers everywhere to stand together in the fight against censorship”, under the umbrella of the American Library Association’s Intellectual Freedom Committee. This initiative debuted in April 2022 in response to the recent increase in challenged materials in libraries. Partners include national, state, and local policymakers and organizations supporting libraries and readers. A list of partner organizations can be found at: <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/partners/>. I look forward to further discussion with the Board at our November meeting.



We are organizations representing parents, educators and librarians, students and readers, authors and publishers, community and advocacy organizations, businesses and workers, nonprofits and faith groups, elected officials and civic leaders, and concerned citizens who are united against book bans. While we come from different walks of life, we all believe in the following principles:

1. **Reading is a foundational skill**, critical to future learning and to exercising our democratic freedoms.
2. **Books are tools for understanding complex issues.** Limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues.
3. **Individuals should be trusted** to make their own decisions about what to read.
4. **Parents should not be making decisions** for other parents' children.
5. **Young people deserve to see themselves** reflected in a library's books.

A large majority of Americans agree with these principles and are opposed to book bans. However, efforts to ban books, especially in schools and libraries, are occurring in unprecedented numbers across the country. The American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked 729 attempts to ban or restrict books and services in libraries, schools, and universities in 2021, resulting in the removal or restriction of more than 1,597 individual book titles. By comparison, the ALA tracked 377 challenges targeting 566 books in 2019.

What is also shocking is the rise in state and local legislation which will make censorship easier, or even allow the criminal prosecution of librarians or teachers for simply doing their jobs—ensuring the public has access to a variety of ideas and perspectives. We fear that the centers of knowledge for families and communities are in jeopardy.

That's why we, the undersigned organizations, call on anyone in a position of power to protect the rights of everyone to access a variety of books, in libraries and elsewhere.

We call on all policymakers to Unite Against Book Bans.

Authorized signature:

Organization name (as it should appear on partner web page):

Name:

Date: _____

I authorize my organization's name to be publicly listed in Unite Against Book Bans materials.

Partners to this statement agree to uphold the principles of the campaign, provide their name for the campaign website and materials, promote the campaign to their constituencies, share information of importance with the campaign coordinators and to their constituencies, and participate in occasional convenings of campaign partners.