

CONGRESSWOMAN
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MASSACHUSETTS 7TH DISTRICT

Books Save Lives Act

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07)

BACKGROUND

Books are essential to the development of our minds, creating a safe space for people to learn about themselves and the world. People of all ages, especially our children, should feel at home in their public libraries by having access to books that reflect the diversity of lived experiences. However, there has been a rise in campaigns to ban books in libraries throughout the country. The 2022-2023 school year alone had more than 3,000 instances of books banned across 33 states.

These efforts target underrepresented communities and undermine educational equity, with books prominently featuring the experiences of people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, religious minorities, and people with disabilities being disproportionately censored. The removal of books uplifting marginalized perspectives contributes to a hostile environment for vulnerable students that isolates and neglects their educational needs while further hindering people from learning about diversity and reinforcing harmful biases and stereotypes.

Moreover, campaigns to ban books endanger the livelihoods of librarians, authors, illustrators, bookstore owners, and more. The professionals responsible for producing and facilitating access to books are facing unprecedented threats to their employment and safety. This may lead to a decline in literature by and about underrepresented communities, further marginalizing people who face systemic discrimination in our society.

BOOKS SAVE LIVES ACT

The Books Save Lives Act would counteract the rise in book bans and help ensure an inclusive learning environment for all students. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Ensure primary and secondary schools have a library with a trained librarian;
- Require public libraries and school libraries to maintain a diverse collection of books;
- Classify discriminatory book bans as violations of federal civil rights laws; and
- Direct the Government Accountability Office to report on the effect of book bans on underrepresented communities.