

My name is [FIRST & LAST] and I live in [TOWN OR COUNTY], Virginia.

I have serious concerns about the VDOE's model policies concerning instructional materials with "sexually explicit content," a broadly vague term that could be applied to important works of literature like *Beloved* by Toni Morrison or *Ulysses* by James Joyce.

As a Virginia resident, I believe that classrooms should be a place where students are free to ask questions, explore new ideas, and learn about diverse viewpoints. The proposed model policies could lead to the exclusion of valuable instructional materials that introduce students to LGBTQ+ stories and experiences, especially those by or for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Even worse, they could potentially prevent LGBTQ+ youth from accessing life-saving information about themselves. Representation matters, and all Virginia students deserve to learn free from censorship and political interference.

While parents are invaluable teachers in their children's lives, the public school system was established to support parents in educating their children. Teachers, librarians, and education experts have years of experience and are well equipped to introduce diverse and sometimes difficult subjects into the classroom while mitigating the harm and trauma these subjects may cause their students. They are trained professionals whose jobs are to put the students' interests first. The proposed model policies would make it harder for these educators to do their job and will likely result in censorship due to teacher and librarian's fear or confusion over what qualifies as "sexually explicit content."

Virginia students deserve to grow up into brave, courageous people who value diversity and inclusion. We are all better off when young people are encouraged to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion.

It is for these reasons that I oppose the proposed model policies.