



## **Past and Current Presidents Statement in Response to SB12**

Indiana Senate Bill 12 (SB12) is attempting to restrict communities' access to relevant information resources by threatening to criminally charge librarians. The mission of the Indiana Library Federation (ILF) is to lead, educate, and advocate to advance library services for the benefit of all Indiana residents. As library professionals and leaders of ILF, it is our duty to advocate for free and open access to information reflecting the diverse communities we serve and represent. The Bill of Rights to the Indiana Constitution states in Article 1, Section 9, “No law shall be passed, restraining the free interchange of thought and opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print, freely, on any subject whatever.”

As degreed, trained, and experienced library professionals, we recognize that not all items in every library are relevant, suitable, or appropriate for all groups. However, for patrons under the age of 18, it is a guardian’s responsibility to guide a child’s reading journey, not a state government. Nor is it the right of one parent or guardian to restrict access to materials provided to other patrons.

To build library collections, many factors are considered. The idea that providing quality, well-reviewed materials selected by trained and certified professionals could result in felony charges is abhorrent. SB12 would make it possible to charge Indiana librarians with a level-6 felony, which is the criminal equivalent to auto theft and strangulation. Convictions of these types of crimes carry a sentence of up to 2.5 years in jail and fines up to \$10,000. Library professionals should not face these charges for doing their jobs and creating spaces that uphold the First Amendment rights of all US citizens.

Some supporters of SB12 are accusing libraries and librarians of providing obscene and pornographic materials to children. It is already illegal to provide access to obscene and pornographic materials to children in Indiana. We want to be very clear in saying that we are against providing obscene and pornographic materials to children. Materials provided in Indiana libraries by professional librarians do not meet the legal definition of obscene and pornographic. This is one of the many reasons why SB12 is unnecessary.

We, the leaders of ILF, recognize that community standards may vary across our state. In those instances when materials need to be reconsidered for collections, we believe it is always more desirable to have local procedures in place than state- or federal-level control over those local standards. Providing the opportunity for local review of library materials has always been a part of basic library operations and practice. This is another reason why SB12 is an unnecessary and redundant bill. Collection development policies outline the process for community members to give voice to their concerns and challenge library materials.

Both the United States and Indiana State constitutions guarantee free and unfettered access to information. While all individuals have the right to determine what is appropriate for their dependents and for themselves to read, no individual or group has the right to determine what is or is not appropriate for others. Indiana librarians protect this First-Amendment right and should not be threatened with criminal prosecution for providing relevant information materials to all patron communities. Therefore, we the past, present, and future presidents of the Indiana Library Federation, representing public, academic, and school libraries, vehemently oppose Senate Bill 12 and any other legislation that would restrict all Hoosiers' freedom to read. To impede on this right is to irreparably damage the futures of Indiana citizens, our systems of education, librarianship as a profession, and the democratic principles upon which our country is built.

Michael Williams, ILF 2022 Past-President

Christopher Proctor, ILF 2023 President

Diane Rogers, ILF 2024 President-Elect