



NYLA Reaffirms Commitment to Intellectual Freedom in Response to Pride Display Removal at Smithtown Public Library

On November 18, 2021, the New York Library Association's Council adopted the following [statement of position on Intellectual Freedom](#) which affirmed that the **"...New York Library Association stands firmly opposed to the restriction, removal, and/or censorship of books and other library materials in an attempt to limit the freedom to read or obstruct intellectual freedom."**

The Smithtown Library Board of Trustees' June 21, 2022 resolution to remove all Pride displays, in addition to the removal of all books of the same subject on display from all Children's sections in all Smithtown Library buildings, is a direct violation of NYLA's commitment to intellectual freedom and the freedom to read that libraries are entrusted to uphold.

This ban of any displays related to Pride sets a dangerous precedent for libraries across the state because it normalizes the victimization of LGBTQ+ youth in their schools and in their communities, which has dire consequences. According to [The Trevor Project's 2020 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#), 40% LGBTQ respondents seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months, and more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth have seriously considered suicide.

Further, [GLSEN's School Climate Survey for LGBTQ+ Students in New York](#) reported over 50% of LGBTQ+ students experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination in their schools. Although [countless research](#) points towards how public LGBTQ+ representation is life saving for LGBTQ+ youth – only 28% of students in New York were taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, or events.

For many LGBTQ+ youth, libraries are the only safe, affirmative, and welcoming space during these formative years of their personal development. Libraries, for our LGBTQ+ youth, are the first place where they see themselves for exactly who they are without retribution. The removal of Pride displays and all related materials on display further perpetuates the cycle of shame and silence of our LGBTQ+ youth. This directly contributes to the increasing risk of LGBTQ+ youth suicide and escalated mental health crisis, while also violating libraries' universal commitment to protecting the freedom to read.

The New York Library Association condemns the Smithtown Public Library Board of Trustees' resolution to remove all Pride displays, in addition to removing all books of the same subject on display from all Children's sections in all Smithtown Library buildings. The New York Library Association stands alongside the LGBTQ+ community, especially our LGBTQ+ youth, who utilize libraries across the state as a refuge to foster their love of learning and of their authentic selves.