



The Freedom  
to Write

# WHAT TO SAY ABOUT BOOK BANS AT SCHOOL BOARD AND LIBRARY MEETINGS

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If you want to speak out, but aren't sure how to talk about book bans at school board meetings or public library meetings, below are some simple suggestions.

Proponents of banning books are increasingly organized and vocal. Make sure voices in support of the freedom to read are represented, too. Student voices are especially effective. To learn more about becoming a student advocate, check out our [Next Gen PEN](#) resources.

## **Before you go:**

- Most school districts allow public comment. Look up your district's rules, and see if you can deliver public testimony. School boards must post a meeting agenda in advance on their websites or on the public announcements space in the facility. There is usually a contact form or address on these agendas that asks if you'd like to make a public comment.
- Enlist backup: friends, parents, or teachers. And if permitted, plan to take photos or video and share your experience on social media (and tag [@PENAmerica](#)). People are more likely to take action if they see you setting an example.

## **WHAT TO SAY ABOUT BOOK BANS AT A SCHOOL BOARD MEETING:**

**Introduce yourself and your connection to the school. (It is enough to be a member of the community.)**

**Example:** Hi, I'm Jane Doe, and my child attends Local Middle School.

**Or:** Hi, I'm John Doe, and I live in Local Community.

**Thank the school or library for their hard work.**

**Example:** I want to thank the school board for their work in keeping our schools safe and enriching for all our children.

**State your support of free expression.**

**Example:** I believe in the freedom to read, but today, that freedom is in danger.

**Consider talking about a specific book that means something to you.**

**Example:** I read this *Challenged Book* in 9th grade, and it showed me that I wasn't alone.

**Or:** My child rarely saw herself in the books assigned at Local Elementary School. When she read *Banned Book*, for the first time, she saw a child who reflected her own identity.

**Cite the facts.**

**Example:** Book bans overwhelmingly target books about race, racism, gender and sexuality, many by Black and LGBTQ authors.

**Or:** An overwhelming majority of Americans oppose book banning.

**Explain why book banning is wrong.**

**Example:** I don't want other parents deciding what my child can read. This ban undermines the right of every parent in this school district to make a choice about what's right for their child.

**Or:** Children should learn the true history of our country, good and bad. Children in this country have been prevented from learning about Ruby Bridges and Martin Luther King Jr., and kept from reading works by Pulitzer Prize-winning authors like Toni Morrison.

**Or:** Students deserve to learn about a broad range of diverse people, places, and perspectives. Our schools must be a place where every student is welcomed, accepted, and valued, regardless of their race, religion, or identity.

**Or:** Books are a safe place for kids to explore different topics that grown ups may not feel comfortable discussing with them.

**Demand accountability.**

**Example:** Books should never be removed because one parent complains. That kind of process leads to censoring books about the lives of people of color and LGBTQ+ people. Book reviews should happen through established channels, following best practices.

**Support librarians and teachers.**

**Example:** I want to thank the librarians and teachers in our district who have worked hard to find books that will enrich our children's lives. Please let them do their jobs and leave decisions on books to educators and each child's parent.