



March 1, 2023

The Honorable Sen. Jon Lundberg  
Chair, Senate Education Committee

**RE: Support for SB1078/HB1040**

As a coalition of teachers, students, education leaders, librarians, and community members of diverse backgrounds from across all three Grand Divisions of the State of Tennessee, we are writing to express our support for SB1078, which will be considered by the Senate Education Committee on March 1st.

At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, Tennessee educators were faced with an unexpected challenge as a result of new laws: they were required to catalog every single book in their classroom library, resulting in unpaid overtime hours for teachers and unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy for local education agencies across the state. SB1078 is important because it amends our current law and removes this onerous task by excluding materials that are maintained by an individual teacher in their classroom. SB1078 ensures teachers' libraries are exempt from having to be identified and posted on the school's website or subject to preview by the local school board or public charter school governing board.

Our educators are already overworked with their current list of responsibilities related to providing individualized support to their students. This support includes encouraging students' reading abilities and fostering early literacy skills through building and providing an accessible, quality classroom library. Some educators have hundreds - even thousands - of books available in their classroom that help create a rigorous, personalized learning environment.

Our current law requiring our educators to list each of their books in their classroom contributes to repetitive, burdensome processes that educators must complete outside of their regular class and lesson preparation hours, without additional external support from their school or district. Moreover, parents and school leaders already have the right and ability to review a teacher's library. As a result of confusion with the law, some educators chose to give away the books in their library this past school year, which means our students are losing valuable learning opportunities because of this requirement. Additionally, restricting access to classroom books and materials undermines important early literacy efforts across the state to improve 3rd-grade reading. Further, our current law creates burdens for administrative leaders who have new processes and tools - without additional resources - to create these lists.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing teacher shortages, which is reflected in our ongoing struggles to attract and retain staff - especially in critical areas such as STEM, early childhood education, special education, and bilingual education. According to the Tennessee State Board of Education, in the 2021-2022 school year, there were 1024 teacher vacancies throughout the state. Our law only serves to increase the workload of our current school staff, and has the potential to increase our state's growing teacher shortage if it remains unchanged.

Overall, the current requirements to report each material in educators' libraries is an unnecessary task. Instead, it has become a distraction for staff who should dedicate their time to fostering student growth and love for reading amidst our school's pandemic recovery efforts. Taking the above into consideration, this bill is a step in the right direction to support our Tennessee teachers and help our students' abilities to thrive, and our Coalition stands in strong support for SB1078.

Sincerely,

The undersigned advocates of the [TN Coalition for Truth in Our Classrooms](#) network

cc: Sen. Jeff Yarbro; Members, Senate Education Committee



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