



Utah Library
Association

Statement on Censorship of Pride Display at Orem Public Library

The Utah Library Association became aware of a censorship issue at Orem Public Library through social media posts on May 29 which stated that the Orem City Council is forbidding the library from doing any displays in the children's area related to Pride Month in Utah. The library director has indicated that in spite of the positive reception and thankful comments from parents last year, there will not be a Pride display in the Children's wing this year, and instead there will be a single display in another location in the Library away from the children's area.

In the interest of serving all members of the community, library staff have wide latitude to create or not create displays, and to decide where to locate them. However, it is unacceptable, and a possible infringement of citizen's first amendment rights, when politicians intervene and direct staff to eliminate planned displays or have them moved to a less frequented area of the library because those politicians do not like the topic or viewpoint being expressed. Moving a children's book display to the adult section where materials may not be age appropriate for children is problematic because it actually increases the likelihood of exposing children to material that is unsuitable for their age and makes the materials less accessible for families and harder to discover.

It is important to note that Pride Month is a nonpartisan observance and recognition of the fight by LGBTQ+ Americans to have their rights as American citizens fully recognized under the law. In 2022 Utah Governor Spencer Cox has again [issued a proclamation](#) naming June "LGBTQ+ Pride month in Utah." The Proclamation says, "we must encourage relevant and vital conversations about what it means to love each other, understand our differences, and support our LGBTQ+ friends and family members." We stand with Governor Cox, and agree with his recent statement in conjunction with the Utah Pride Month Proclamation that "there should be nothing controversial about supporting a group of people in our state who have historically been marginalized."

Sadly, we know that LGBTQIA+ youth have a higher incidence of mental health issues and the highest youth suicide rate in the nation and (according to a CDC report) are four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. Additionally, research from the Trevor Project reports that LGBTQ+ youth are less likely to attempt suicide when they have access to LGBTQ+-affirming spaces and information, which means there are literally life and death implications at stake. In short, a display of curated, age-appropriate materials, in conjunction with Utah Pride Month, is an absolutely appropriate and important way for the library to serve Orem's parents and youth, families, neighbors and friends.

It must also be noted that in a state where hate crimes against LGBTQ+ residents nearly doubled last year there are real and measurable health and safety impacts to be considered when Council members forbid age-appropriate displays of LGBTQ+ materials. Indeed, a recent news article reported that "officials and community members worry divisive politics could embolden future attacks." [*Hate crimes against Utah LGBTQ nearly doubled last year, with a big jump during Pride Month, Salt Lake Tribune, May 31, 2022*]



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We trust librarians to fulfill the library's mission, and to create collections and displays for all community members, without illegitimate, politicized pressure to restrict, impede, or limit community members' access to age-appropriate information based on viewpoint.

We therefore request that Orem City Council members publicly and transparently address their actions in this matter, rescind any directives they have given to the library related to displays of materials, and commit to refraining from future directives that seek to restrict library staff from carrying out the mission of the library, or directives that seek to limit access to information for the residents of Orem.

Signed

- **Utah Library Association:** Marissa Bischoff, President; Katie Wegner and Rikki Carter, Intellectual Freedom Co-Chairs; Peter Bromberg and Rebekah Cummings, Advocacy Co-Chairs
- **Equality Utah,** Troy Williams, Executive Director
- **PFLAG, Provo/Utah County,** Heather Kester, Vice-President
- **Utah LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce,** Liz Pitts She|They, President & CEO



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UTAH LGBTQ+
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

