I am increasingly concerned about the growing number of states enacting laws banning books from public schools and libraries. As one of your constituents, I urge you to support Sen Amanda Cappelletti’s introduction of a bill that would ban schools and public libraries from banning books.

Although Pennsylvania is the birthplace of American independence and the home of America's first library originally founded by Ben Franklin, Senator Cappelletti reports that "We are one of the worst states in book banning efforts now. We had 56 attempts to ban over 302 unique titles,"

Instead, we must protect our legacy of American freedom and our First Amendment Rights for all by ensuring that books are allowed to remain on shelves. Parents have the right to decide what people, values, and beliefs they wish to expose their children to, including the decision to homeschool, but U.S. law does not grant them the right to impose those decisions on other parents’ children. Most schools today offer students one or more alternative book titles, if a parent has a concern about a particular assignment. A teacher or principal should encourage parents to exercise that option because their complaint should not disrupt what the rest of the class reads

While much book banning involves recent books on sexuality, race and gender identity, banned titles also include classics, biographies of famous Americans, speeches, and children’s books. These classics are just some of the books on the banned books list:

* To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
* A Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
* Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck
* The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
* The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
* Beloved by Toni Morrison
* The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
* Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
* 1984 by George Orwell
* The Holy Bible

At a time when the country has never been more polarized, it is hardly surprising that voters, especially parents, may object to certain materials and ideas taught in public schools. However, public and private K-12 schools alike must meet state and federal education mandates regarding what concepts, subjects, and skills children must master to advance to the next grade. School boards working in conjunction with trained, accredited principals, teachers, school, and resources professionals, NOT state lawmakers, are trained professional and therefore in the best position to determine which texts are most effective and beneficial in helping students meet those mandates.

It is your responsibility as a legislator to advocate for the rights of all. We need you to not just stand up for, but actively reaffirm and uphold, the rights that ALL people have to borrow, read, and talk about books, literature, and factual information without censorship.