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For immediate release: Tuesday, June 2

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Senator May Leads Fight for the Right to Read

Ensures Students Have Access to a Diverse Collection of Reading Materials in
School Libraries

(Albany, NY) The New York State Senate today passed Senator Rachel May's Freedom to Read Act, legislation that requires school districts to adopt clear, public policies for reviewing challenges to library materials and protects students' access to a broad range of reading materials.

"Every student deserves the freedom to explore ideas, ask questions, and discover new perspectives through reading. Libraries play an important role in that process by providing access to a broad range of age-appropriate materials that explore diverse communities and experiences. The Freedom to Read Act helps ensure that decisions about school library collections remain in the hands of trained professionals and protects students' ability to learn and engage with the world around them," said Senator Rachel May.

The Freedom to Read Act requires every school district in New York to adopt a written policy for reviewing challenged library materials and post it publicly. That policy must establish how complaints are submitted, set a timeline for review, and create a reconsideration committee that includes a certified librarian, a teacher, a school administrator, and a parent. A book under review stays on the shelf until the process is complete. Librarians cannot be disciplined for selecting or retaining materials that comply with district policy. And no book can be removed solely because someone disagrees with the ideas, viewpoints, or identities it represents.

With more than 4,200 titles challenged or banned nationwide last year — including many featuring LGBTQIA+ characters — and 92 percent of those challenges driven by coordinated political campaigns rather than individual parents, New York students need these protections now. California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington have all enacted similar laws. New York

should join them.

The bill now heads to the Assembly. Senator May is urging the Assembly to pass the bill before the legislative session ends this week.

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