
RESIDENTS SUE CITY OVER LIBRARY CENSORSHIP

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Restrictive library measures violate CA Freedom to Read Act

HUNTINGTON BEACH – On Wednesday, three Huntington Beach residents, including two teenagers, along with the non-profit Alianza Translatinx, filed a lawsuit against city leaders. The suit challenges a censorship scheme within the Huntington Beach Library System that directly violates the California Freedom to Read Act and the California Constitution.

"Libraries should reflect, not erase, and be spaces where young people can discover who they are," said **Khloe Rios-Wyatt, founding member & CEO of Alianza Translatinx**. "Huntington Beach officials, driven by fear of challenging ideas, are trying to erase stories and identities – but we refuse to be erased."

In October 2023, the Huntington Beach City Council passed a resolution that called for "review of library materials containing sexual content" and restricted minors' access to these materials. As

part of a subsequent ordinance, the city established a 21-member community review board with unappealable power to impose a censorial process over the library collection.

These measures impede access to a wide range of topics including educational materials on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and reproductive health. For example, last February, the city moved the following literature to a restricted area of the library:

- The children’s book *Everyone Poops* by Taro Gomi;
- The general science book *The Way We Work: Getting to Know the Amazing Human Body* by David Macaulay; and
- Rajani LaRocca’s *Your One and Only Heart*, a nonfiction picture book that explains the scientific importance of the human heart to children in poetic and lyrical terms.

“For young people especially, freedom of thought begins with the freedom to read. To read is to explore and learn—to see one’s experience reflected by others or to imagine oneself in the shoes of another,” said **David Loy, legal director of the First Amendment Coalition**. “The government has no business standing in the way of young people as they grow into adulthood by reading about the diverse experiences of the world around them.”

Filed in Orange County Superior Court by the ACLU Foundation of Southern California, the First Amendment Coalition, Community Legal Aid SoCal, and Jenner & Block LLP, the lawsuit seeks to compel Huntington Beach to comply with the requirements of the 2024 California Freedom to Read Act and the California Constitution and to prohibit the city from implementing and enforcing its censorship scheme.

“Public libraries are a vital resource providing access to information and free or low-cost services that improve people’s lives,” said **Ryan M. Kendall, attorney at Community Legal Aid SoCal representing plaintiff Alianza Translatinx.** “California law protects the important role libraries play in our communities. This lawsuit seeks to keep the Huntington Beach Public Library and its services free from censorship and accessible to all, so that everyone—from individuals to community organizations—can continue to rely on the knowledge and empowerment the library provides.”

Read the complaint: <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/cases/alianza-translatinx-v-city-huntington-beach/complaint>
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