Appeal to the Beaufort County School Board

17 MAY 2023

Book Review Committee Review

Michael E Covert, Appellant

Beaufort County School Board

2900 Mink Point Boulevard

Beaufort, SC 29902

Current Books Appealed: "*Almost Perfect"; "Fade"; "Fallout"; "Foul is Fair, Golden Boys Beware"; "Gabbi, A Girl in Pieces"; "Identical"; "Push"; and "Tricks".*

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Chair Gwodz, School Board Members, Superintendent Rodriguez;

Please consider this as my formal appeal to the above referenced books, supposedly reviewed by separate review committees.

I thank you for receiving this appeal, I would think it would be appropriate and professional of all members acknowledge whether or not you are reading these appeals. I have spoken to four (4) members, three (3) have and one (1) has admitted he has not.

I also want to address an "elephant in the room". Some of the more egregious people that regularly attend School Board meetings in an effort to publicly demean me and some of the other citizens who believe such as I; have been operating a smear campaign. Several of them have posted addresses of some folks online; some have made publicly false accusations; all have been derogatory and now several are quoting me on something inaccurately.
In a previous appeal, I QUOTED from a book from an African American female Doctor of Medicine on the subject of books, or, obscenities etc….however you are allowing people to now take it, tweek it, and call it a quote from me. It is those folks who may not have had an experience in holding public office and acts such as this are harmful and unfair. Acts such as this could actually lead to people NOT being involved in this process because of a hard left leaning, politically motivated group's desires and devious plans. I ask you to address this. NOWHERE in my, or the other complainant's Appeals, have we said ANYTHING derogatory or defaming of these people. The same courtesy should be applied.

I also find it imperative to make perfectly clear— my concern in this issue, and my appeal(s) have absolutely nothing to do with politics in any form. There are those bad actors out there that either have tried to make it or will try to make it political. I have not and will not do so. As a matter fact, since the last appeal, those opposing what Mrs. Szalai and I have been appealing as the "complainants", has gone so far off of the rails and that the only substantive result is that it is THEY that are doing this as a form of politicizing the event(s).

While reviewing this appeal, I ask that each of you have a copy of the ***Beaufort County School District Progressive Discipline Plan Student Code of Conduct*** handy beside you. Throughout this handbook, keeping these books on the shelves is violating your OWN regulations set forth for student conduct. How can you enforce regulations of inappropriate materials with irreverent or inappropriate language; obscene language, gestures, writing, comments etc; the possession of pornography; using obscene language; using violence towards people; using violence

towards females; etc--- when you would be glorifying it through the constant use of these materials. The irony and double standards would be deafening.

The School Board Trustees need to understand and comprehend what is at "play" here:

- Currently, the SC General Assembly also feels that this entire subject is important enough that both houses of the General Assembly have undertaken Bills that would immediately address ALL of the 97 books that were requested to be reviewed, and even more.
- UPDATE to previous Appeal: Now there are Bills that have moved through the House and Senate in the SC General Assembly. There are four (4) that have entered committee and will be passing through next session will no real obstacles. It is important that you understand, **YOU WILL BE IN VIOLATION OF STATE LAW.** If you continue to allow these books to remain in circulation, you are WILLINGLY PROVIDING OBSCENE AND PORNOGRAPHIC METERIAL TO CHILDREN. The Governor has signed off that funds will be withheld from any and all Public School Districts found in violation once signed from the Governor.
- We have support from the SC Department of Education Superintendent Weaver.
- House Bill 3728 has crossed over to the Senate. It is highly anticipated that the Senate will pass amendments to the House Bill3728, and cause of action being a Conference Committee to be formed. Conferees would design a final Bill amicable to both Houses and sent on to the Governor for signature into law. –**NOW DONE!**

"***Tricks*", by Ellen Hopkins**

I believe that this Author, must have some kind of "problem" in life and I actually feel very sorry and concerned for her. I hope she finds whatever it is she is missing in life. This book is the #1 most removed book in public school libraries and public libraries in the nation. #2 is "*Gender Queer*" and is "as abhorrent" to the development of children's minds, bodies and soul.
"*Tricks*" is a novel about five (5) children who fell into prostitution, all having belonged to different walks of life. Child Prostitution is ABHORRENT. "Putting my money where my mouth is", as they say, I work on a part time basis with an Agency that roots out and removes these pimps and thugs etc from the streets here in the LowCountry. Not only child prostitution which is a form of trafficking, but also sex trafficking general; narcotics; crisis intervention and suicide intervention and negotiation.
"*Tricks*" is simply NOT for anyone commonly referred as a "CHILD". To date, this is the most disgusting book the "committee" has ruled on. The "committee" is problematic and we've made multiple notices about that. How can you—as a school board OF THE PEOPLE, not the government as member Geier has said on the record. If there was only ONE book to be removed from the 97….THIS is the one. Yet—if you follow the precedence you have already set, you won't even talk about it- you'll disregard it—and you'll let go back into circulation.

There are several key points to consider:

- The overall purpose of school education is to give students the skills to support himself or herself in a career and economically contribute to society. **Nothing in the books reviewed can be applied to that statement.**
- Public School Boards **MUST** be cognizant of and pay special attention to the risk associated with this type of material, based on past and current case law. The RISKS included herein include, but are not limited to, the actual demise and denigrating of our society. You are **WILLINGLY** approving material that:

  a) YOU don't allow to be read at your own meetings
  b) Are NOT allowed to be read on television
  c) Are NOT allowed to be read on the radio
  d) NO PASTOR that I have talked to would allow them to be read in church or synagogue or mass
  e) The MAJORITY of parents DO-NOT-APPROVE-OF

- The suggestion or accusation from outside influencers that the Beaufort County School District in removing these books is "unconstitutional" and "violates the First Amendment rights of students", is **clearly and unequivocally incorrect.** As is briefed about previously, this has been settled over time and even in cases such as *Pico*, where those same groups utilize sound bites et al, because of the plurality ruling, is backfiring on them.
- Public Schools utilize Public Tax Dollars to build and operate, maintain etc. Just as the groups who complained and won court battles over Bibles in schools; 10 Commandments in schools; prayer in schools; have been successful because the public-school setting must be "for all". Continuing to provide this vulgar material in our Public School system is unconscionable and not in favor of the "for all" mantra.
- It is a public tragedy and is quite frankly disgusting of the comments I have heard by Mr. Geier, Ms Boatwright, Mr Campbell and Mr Smith--- regarding this exercise. They have shown true neglect in the duties and unwilling to do what it is they campaigned on. The public is fully aware and is cognizant of this. Your time on the School Board will be short.

Again, let me reiterate--- there is/are **NO FIRST AMENDMENT PROTECTION TO OBSCENITIES OR PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL.**

This overreaching subject is not only catching the eyes and ears here in Beaufort County and in EVERY County in SC, but there are country- wide reports of this:

- UFC Champion Holly Holm recently stated in an interview after winning a match, "sexualizing children is one of the legs of the left-wing three-legged stool. The other two are "everything is racist" and "any opposing viewpoint on the internet is misinformation. Stop sexualizing children," as her post fight comment.

- In Texas, more than 1500 parents have signed a petition by Texas Mothers calling their school board to remove 90 pornographic books from the public school libraries in Keller Independent School District
- There have been several video s released by parents in the State of Maine, where they are showing up at School Board meetings and demanding this type of indoctrination and grooming of THEIR kids stop!
- A group named, "Parents Defending Education" released the information on Kutztown Area High School in Bucks County, PA, they were offering students the books "*Gender Queer*" (featuring transgenderism and graphic illustrations of sex acts) and "*All Boys Aren't Blue*" (the memoir of a "queer" young male of color, including his first sexual relationships)
- PDE has also released the information on the Mesa County Valley School District 51 in Colorado due to them offering resources for all teachers including 15 "Great New LGTBQ Middle Grade Books"; 30 "Essential LGBT+ Books for YA Readers"; books with LGBT Character for grades PreK-3, Grades 4-7 and Grades 9 and up; several diverse children's books supporting LGTBQ inclusive elementary schools

However, let's be real about this entire thing. It **IS** all about control and politics, from those that are up in arms. Across this Nation and in South Carolina, teacher's unions and library associations are the two driving forces. **IF YOU THINK THERE AREN'T TEACHERS UNIONS, you haven't been paying attention**. SC For Ed, as one example, is as close to a "labor union" as one could get. The NEA is active in this state as well. Both are very clear about wanting to transform education into something it was never designed to be; racially and socially just, and equitable. Teachers unions, and those that are want-to-be, collaborates wiuth LGBT activist groups and provides numerous resources for teachers to promote homosexuality and transgenderism in schools. Library groups like the ALA, (American Library Association) supports 100% of exposing children to sexually explicit and confusing materials. They even have a "Bill of Rights" that states "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views". That organization believes that parents **CAN BE KEPT** in the dark about what their children read, as another "right" states, "All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess **a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use**". The ALA makes it perfectly clear, crystal clear, that all books should be available to all students. "Restricting access to library materials **based on age or grade** level does not respect the individual needs, interests, and abilities of patrons and violates the Library Bill of Rights" (my emphasis)

Again, in case you haven't been watching, there are teachers and librarians (emphasis on librarians) in this County who are promoting this very, exact, thing.

Ironically, over the past year or two, there have been two teachers, oddly at the same school, in Beaufort County, that were overreaching in the above instances and even one sending our "surveys" to her students….that *"we can keep this between us if you don't want your parent or guardian to know."* There are at least TWO librarians that we have

not exposed yet, but will if the school district does not take action to their behaviors EXACTLY what they A.L.A. dictates above.

It is my contention that these books be removed in totality from the Beaufort County Public School system.

Chairwoman Dr. Gwodz, School Board Members and Dr Rodriguez, I believe my appeal to be just; to be inclusive of **EVERYONE**, not just a select few. The only rational choice here is to do the following:

- The Appeals I have submitted should ALL BE READ in their entirety.
- The books referenced by me in this set of appeals, are not worthy of being in any part of a child's learning curriculum. There is nothing to be gained in middle or high school from glorifying rape; sexual abuse; sodomy; drug abuse, slavery, prostitution, etc. **If you believe there is, then publicly say that**. It will be the demise of your elected position.
- If Beaufort County School District is ready and fully prepared to take on the very expensive legal battles that **YOU ARE NOT IMMUNE** from both professionally and personally, then continue to ignore and approve the very same things you **WOULD NOT ALLOW** to be read in public at your meetings. You are damaging human minds with the continued approval of these materials.

As a friendly reminder, I sent every one of you an email where I put together a substantial compromise to end this. ONLY *TWO* OF YOU had the decency to speak to me about it. How embarrassing is this when the County School Board does not have the common decency to respond to a tax payer, and even more so to one that as a former elected official believes in and has participated in Professional Courtesy towards the School Board.

I continue to believe that a system of OPT IN rather than OPT OUT, placing the onus on the parent, not the librarian or teacher, would be a great compromise for both sides. Would there be a cost possibly to do this? One time yes, but very minor, however you have to ask yourselves--- "What is the worth of the child in keeping them safe?" If you need additional help with the OPT IN suggestion, please feel free to reach out.

To conclude, let me be perfectly clear on something that I know has been mentioned in certain circles. I am NOT going to be "just going away". I am NOT going to be "forgetting about this and move on to something else". I am NOT going to "just let it go"; and you will NOT silence me. For the sake of children and children still come, I will fight this effort of human decency and human dignity as long as it takes. It is YOU that will come,

and go…..beyond this. We already see people from Districts of Port Royal, Burton, Okatie, St Helena and Northern Beaufort, preparing for a “run” to remove some of you.

I thank you all for hopefully taking the time to read my Appeal in its entirety and ask for your relief in proper ruling of overturning the committee’s review for the book’s mentioned herein.

Respectfully;

Michael E Covert
[redacted]

To the media of which this has been given a copy of: It is time the media in the South Carolina Low Country and Coastal Georgia markets begin to <u>also</u> share in the news of this subject, as “the rest of the story”. There are people on “the other side” making false claims, political attacks and claims for their own edification. There are people on the School Board who think this is a “joke”, “not their responsibility”, and would rather “cow-tow” to those that are loud and oppressive in lieu of talking with both sides for fear of their political legacy ending abruptly.