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June 18, 2025

The Honorable Richard Geier
Beaufort Board of Education Chair
Beaufort County School District
2900 Mink Point Boulevard
Beaufort, SC 29902

RECEIVED
JUN 25 2025
By the Beaufort County
Board of Education

Dear Chairman Geier,

Thank you for your continued engagement with the South Carolina State Board of Education regarding the review of instructional materials. We sincerely appreciate the time, effort and resources that the Beaufort County School District has invested in this important work. Your commitment to ensuring students have access to appropriate and enriching educational resources is deeply valued.

As you know, the State Board of Education has reviewed fifteen materials at your request. We have appreciated the opportunity to support your district through this process during this transition period and hope our involvement has been helpful in navigating these complex and often sensitive issues. As we move forward, the State Board of Education believes it is time for your local board to resume the lead in reviewing additional complaints, using the framework outlined in Regulation 43-170 and the orders corresponding to the materials we have reviewed.

We recognize that the prior model policy, while well-intentioned, led to inconsistency across districts in determining age-appropriateness. This created understandable confusion for educators, parents, and school leaders alike. In response to growing concerns across the state, the State Board initiated a collaborative process in 2023 to create a more uniform and transparent standard.

Regulation 43-170 was the product of that effort—developed with extensive public input, revised to address feedback, and adopted unanimously after multiple public hearings. Its purpose is to provide local boards like yours with a clear, consistent, and legally sound process to evaluate instructional

materials. This regulation establishes a clear standard based on South Carolina law, especially regarding depictions or descriptions of sexual conduct. It limits the number of complaints to five materials per month to ensure manageability and thorough review. And, maybe most notably, Regulation 43-170 empowers local school boards, like the Beaufort County School District Board of Education, to engage directly with families to resolve concerns before a local hearing of the complaint or escalating to the state level through an appeal.

When your district requested the State Board's assistance with specific titles after previously expending considerable resources under former guidelines, we stepped in both to offer support and to model how the new process could be implemented statewide. To date, we've reviewed 27 materials—including the 15 materials directly requested by your board and an additional six previously considered by your board. Of those, 21 titles were found not to be age and developmentally appropriate due to descriptions or depictions of sexual conduct, as defined in long-standing South Carolina law. One title, though it contains mature themes such as drug use and assault, was deemed permissible with parental consent. Five titles were retained without any restriction.

The State Board of Education has issued written orders related to each of these materials as required under the regulation. A review of these orders should provide a helpful guide for your board in future evaluations. As outlined in Regulation 43-170, each book should be reviewed individually and carefully, with particular attention to any passages that may meet the legal definition of "sexual conduct." Your board's decision on each material should be documented in accordance with the requirements of the regulation.

We know this is not easy work, and we want to express our gratitude for your dedication to students. If you or your team need support as you move forward, please don't hesitate to reach out to Robert Cathcart who supports our Instructional Materials Review Committee at rdcathcart@ed.sc.gov.

We look forward to continued collaboration as we work together to ensure South Carolina students have access to high-quality, age-appropriate instructional materials in every classroom.

Warm regards,

Rita Allison

Merita "Rita" Allison
Chair, South Carolina State Board of Education