

**Muscatine County**



For Immediate Release

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## **LGBTQIA+ Equality Coalition Releases “Freedom to Read” Bookmarks**

The Muscatine County LGBTQIA+ Equality Coalition releases “Freedom to Read” bookmarks for Banned Book Week, a program created in 1982 by the American Library Association to raise awareness about the harms of censorship. Each bookmark includes an “LGBTQIA+ Reads” list, either for elementary, middle, or high school students.

Amber Harden, a coalition member, said, “As the mom of an out gay man, these book bans are terrifying. Can you imagine if stories about other groups of people were banned from school libraries? No stories about people with disabilities, no stories about people who are latino, no stories about people who are black, no stories about immigrants. It is absurd, and dangerous for LGBTQIA+ kids and families.”

“These bookmarks are a small way to draw attention to a law that not only tries to eliminate the existence of out LGBTQIA+ people from within Iowa’s school walls, but puts the right to access information and intellectual freedom on the chopping block as well - both of which are cornerstones of our democratic processes,” said Jessica Brackett, a coalition member.

In August 2024, an appeals court overturned an injunction against a 2023 Iowa state law. Iowa can now enforce a book ban on anything that depicts or describes sex acts (except from religious or health text), while prohibiting instruction or curriculum about gender identity and sexual orientation through grade six. The law will now go back to district court, where the district court will be asked to block the law again.

Representing Iowa Safe Schools in this lawsuit, the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, Lambda Legal and Jenner & Block issued a joint statement, [“Iowa families, and especially LGBTQ+ students who will again face bullying, intimidation, and censorship as they return for a new school year, are deeply frustrated and disappointed by this delay. Denying LGBTQ+ youth the chance to see themselves represented in classrooms and books sends a harmful message of shame and stigma that should not exist in schools.”](#)

According to Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, ["This is a dangerous time for readers and the public servants who provide access to reading materials. Readers, particularly students, are losing access to critical information, and librarians and teachers are under attack for doing their jobs."](#)

The MHS Pride Club will be tying rainbow ribbons on the bookmarks this week, then they will be available at libraries around the community, Faith United Church of Christ, and Zion Lutheran Church.

The mission of the Muscatine County LGBTQIA+ Equality Coalition is to bring together lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual+ and allied people and organizations to increase awareness and understanding of issues facing LGBTQIA+ people in Muscatine County.

The next coalition meeting will be on Tuesday, October 15, 6:00 pm, on zoom. All are welcome.

Find additional information at [www.MuscatineEqualityCoalition.com](http://www.MuscatineEqualityCoalition.com) or contact us at [Info@MuscatineEqualityCoalition.com](mailto:Info@MuscatineEqualityCoalition.com).