

NMFAM Legislative Guide for SB49

School Age-Appropriate Filtering Project

Included:

- Simplified Breakdown of the Bill pg. 2
 - *A plain-language explanation of what the bill does, section by section, written to quickly clarify intent, scope, and real-world impact without legal jargon.*
- Messaging & Fact Tool (*Helpful to Legislators*) pg. 4
 - *Key talking points paired with supporting facts and data to help legislators clearly and confidently explain their position in committee, on the floor, or with constituents.*
- Likely Opposition Arguments—& How to Respond (*for Legislators*) pg. 6
 - *A brief overview of the most common arguments in opposition of the bill, along with concise, factual rebuttals legislators can use in debate or media interviews.*
- Messaging for Action Items & Socials pg. 9
 - *Ready-to-use language for action alerts, social media, and constituent outreach that clearly communicates the issue and drives timely engagement.*

SB 49 — Simplified Breakdown

School Age-Appropriate Filtering & Evaluation Project

What is SB 49?

SB 49 creates a **3-year pilot program** within the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) that allows **voluntary school districts and charter schools** to adopt an **age-appropriate rating system for library materials**.

The goal is to **increase parent engagement, restore trust between families and schools, and protect students**, *without banning books or limiting academic freedom*.

SB0049

How the Bill Works (In Plain Terms)

1. Voluntary Participation

- Schools **choose** whether or not to participate.
- No district or charter school is forced to join.

2. Age-Appropriate Rating System

- Participating schools rate library materials based on:
 - Language
 - Violence
 - Sexual content
 - Mature themes
- Ratings are based on **child development and local community standards**, not political ideology.

3. Parent Transparency

- Parents receive a **published list of rated library materials**.
- Schools must provide a way for parents to give **feedback**.

4. Parent Survey

- Parents complete a survey measuring:

- Trust in the school
- Engagement with their child's education
- Satisfaction with transparency

5. Pilot Size & Scope

- **20 schools per year**, spread across the state.
- Each participant implements the program in:
 - An elementary school
 - A middle/junior high school (if applicable)
 - A high school

(flexibility for rural and charter schools)

Funding & Accountability

- Each participating school receives:
 - **\$25,000 when selected**
 - **\$25,000 after completing parent surveys**
- PED must:
 - Develop best-practice guidance
 - Collect and analyze survey results
 - Report findings annually
 - Submit a final report by **December 1, 2029**
- Funding limits ensure:
 - **No more than \$1M/year** for grants
 - **Strict caps on administrative costs**

SB 49 — Messaging & Fact Tool

Core Message

SB 49 is about **parental trust, transparency, and age-appropriate education** — not book bans, censorship, or politics.

What SB 49 DOES

- ✓ Gives parents **clear information** about school library content
- ✓ Respects **local values and community standards**
- ✓ Encourages **parent involvement**, not conflict
- ✓ Protects **intellectual freedom and academic integrity**
- ✓ Uses a **pilot program** to test effectiveness before expansion

What SB 49 DOES NOT DO

- X Does **not ban books**
- X Does **not remove materials from libraries**
- X Does **not mandate participation**
- X Does **not limit teacher instruction**
- X Does **not impose statewide ideology**

Why It Matters to Families

- Parents can't guide what they can't see.
- Transparency builds trust.
- Trust leads to engagement.
- Engaged parents = better outcomes for kids.

SB 49 acknowledges a simple truth: **parents are partners in education, not obstacles.**

Key Facts to Remember

- **Voluntary pilot program**

- **Age-based ratings, not censorship**
- **Local control preserved**
- **Clear safeguards for academic freedom**
- **Data-driven evaluation through parent surveys**

Simple Talking Point (4th-Grade Friendly)

“SB 49 helps parents know what kinds of books are in school libraries so they can better help their kids. Schools don’t have to join, no books are banned, and parents get a voice.”

LIKELY OPPOSITION ARGUMENTS — & HOW TO RESPOND

Opposition Claim #1: “This is a book ban.”

Rebuttal:

SB 49 does **not ban, remove, or restrict access** to books.

It creates a **rating system**, similar to movie or game ratings, so parents are informed—not excluded.

 *Rating ≠ Removal.*

Opposition Claim #2: “This is censorship.”

Rebuttal:

Censorship removes speech. SB 49 **adds information**.

Students retain access, libraries retain materials, and educators retain instructional authority.

 *Transparency strengthens freedom—it doesn’t weaken it.*

Opposition Claim #3: “This will limit academic freedom.”

Rebuttal:

SB 49 explicitly states its purpose is to **protect intellectual freedom and academic integrity**.

Instructional materials are excluded, and participation is voluntary.

 *Academic freedom is safeguarded in the bill itself.*

Opposition Claim #4: “The state shouldn’t interfere in local schools.”

Rebuttal:

SB 49 does the opposite—it **respects local control**.

Districts choose whether to participate, and ratings reflect **local norms and developmental standards**, not a statewide mandate.

 *Local decision-making is preserved.*

✖ Opposition Claim #5: “Parents already have enough access.”

Rebuttal:

If parents were truly informed and engaged, trust wouldn’t be eroding. SB 49 acknowledges that **access without clarity isn’t partnership**.

❖ *Informed parents are engaged parents.*

✖ Opposition Claim #6: “This will stigmatize books or students.”

Rebuttal:

Age-appropriateness is about **development**, not judgment.

Just as we guide children in movies, media, and online content, schools can responsibly guide library exposure—without shame or restriction.

Additionally, age-appropriate ratings help protect the most vulnerable students.

Trauma-impacted children face higher risks when exposed to mature content too early or before they have had time to heal. SB 49 allows schools to be mindful of developmental readiness and emotional safety—especially for at-risk students—without removing access or singling anyone out.

❖ Why this matters:

This reframes the issue away from “stigmatization” and toward **child protection**, which is:

- Trauma-informed
- Child-centered
- Extremely hard to argue against
- Naturally bipartisan

❖ *Protecting kids is not stigmatizing them.*

✖ Opposition Claim #7:

“Schools don’t need rating systems—parents can monitor on their own.”

Rebuttal:

Everywhere else in society where children consume content, age-based safeguards already exist. Movies, video games, streaming platforms, and even app stores use ratings

or warnings to protect children. Institutions that failed to do so—such as social media platforms—are now facing real-time accountability.

New Mexico's own Attorney General is currently suing Meta for failing to protect children from harmful AI chatbot companions. Protecting kids from inappropriate content is no longer optional—it's expected.

Schools should not be the one place where safeguards lag behind, especially since attendance is mandatory. SB 49 simply brings schools in line with widely accepted child-protection standards.

Why this works:

- Connects SB 49 to **real-world accountability**
- Frames schools as needing to “catch up,” not overreach
- Preempts the “parents already handle this” argument
- Aligns with SB 65 momentum and public concern

STRATEGIC NOTE

If asked “*Why is this bipartisan?*”, the answer becomes:

Because protecting children—especially the most vulnerable—from premature exposure to harmful content is a shared responsibility, regardless of ideology.

Messaging for Action Items & Socials

CALL TO ACTION — SB 49

Support Transparency & Parent Partnership in Our Schools

Parents deserve to know what materials are available to their children at school. **SB 49** creates a **voluntary, age-appropriate rating pilot** for school library materials—giving families transparency, restoring trust, and strengthening parent engagement *without banning books or limiting academic freedom*.

This bill respects **local control**, protects **intellectual freedom**, and recognizes parents as **partners in education**, not obstacles.

TAKE ACTION TODAY

Contact your legislators and urge them to **SUPPORT SB 49**.

Tell them New Mexico families want transparency, trust, and collaboration in our public schools.

Key Message for Legislators:

SB 49 is a voluntary, data-driven pilot that empowers parents, preserves academic integrity, and builds trust—without censorship or mandates.

SOCIAL MEDIA CTA LANGUAGE

Option 1: Short & Punchy (Great for Reels/Stories)

Parents deserve transparency.

SB 49 gives families a voice—**without banning books**.

- ✓ Voluntary
- ✓ Age-appropriate
- ✓ Parent trust matters

 Tell legislators to **SUPPORT SB 49** today.

 Take action in one click.

Option 2: Educational (Feed Post / Carousel)

SB 49 is NOT a book ban.

It's a **parent-engagement pilot**.

- ✓ Schools opt in
- ✓ Materials are rated—not removed
- ✓ Parents get information & a voice
- ✓ Academic freedom is protected

➡ Tell lawmakers: Say YES to transparency.

👉 Support SB 49.

Option 3: Values-Driven

When parents and schools work together, kids thrive.

SB 49 strengthens trust by giving families clarity about library materials—while respecting local control and academic freedom.

⚠ Stand with New Mexico families.

👉 Contact your legislator and support SB 49 today.
