



COMMUNITY OF GLEN RIDGE • NEW JERSEY

Why did CDE Submit Requests for Evaluation of Library Materials for Seven Books in the Library?

In July 2022, a Glen Ridge mother and her two children were in the Glen Ridge Public Library where they came upon these books—*You Know, Sex* and *Here and Queer*—on display on tables located in the juvenile section. Concerned over content she felt was inappropriate for her young children (ages 7 and 9), she brought the books to the attention of library staff, one of whom shared her concern. The next day, this mother reached out to CDE, who then took time to visit the library and found many books of similar nature and content. In response to expressed concern, library staff provided Request for Evaluation of Library Material forms and instructed the CDE members to submit the forms to the library director. *This is the process the library has in place for all residents of Glen Ridge and is the only means by which concerns over content in the library are considered.*

CDE submitted these requests, because CDE wants the library to consider removing, relocating or putting mechanisms in place to protect minors in Glen Ridge from coming into casual contact with material of this nature.

Why did CDE Choose these Books: *Let's Talk About It, It's Perfectly Normal, All Boys Aren't Blue, Here and Queer, It's Not the Stork, This Book is Gay, and You Know, Sex?*

Citizens Defending Education brought these books to the attention of the library as inappropriate for minors for reasons including but not limited to their sexually explicit and pervasively vulgar content; attacks on people of faith, specifically Jews, Muslims, and Christians; instructions to young readers on how to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors as well as the illegal activities of *sexting* and finding, purchasing, and “enjoying” *pornography* on the internet.

CDE members attended the Library Board of Trustee meetings in November and December 2022 and expressed to the board and director concerns over the books brought to their attention.

When CDE's Requests Were Denied by the Library's Director, Why did CDE Decide to Appeal the Decision?

The CDE package that was submitted to the library director in October 2022 contained completed individual “Request for Evaluation of Library Material” forms from eight Glen Ridge residents. Over the course of the two months prior, each person independently reviewed some or all of these books to gain full insight and context. In the individual reviews, CDE members did as requested and provided what they objected to about the work, in full or in part, and cited specific examples, including quotes and page numbers as well as providing copies of entire pages of particular concern. Per the process, the director has the authority to respond

without seeking advice from the Glen Ridge Public Library Board of Trustees. Rather than providing a response, or responses, addressing our concerns as detailed in the CDE requests for review, the director sent letters containing a generic template to each complainant.

CDE's disappointment stems primarily from what appears to be a disregard for the concerns raised regarding the safety of young readers in Glen Ridge. CDE feels the director did not take responsibility for her decision by addressing any of the points raised in the requests for review. Instead, she primarily referred to the library's Book Selection Policy and Kirkus reviews as reason for placing and keeping these books on the shelves of the Glen Ridge Public Library. (Kirkus is a marketing company to which authors pay large fees for positive reviews and marketing to libraries, bookstores, and other outlets.)

At this time, *the Board advised that CDE could follow the process and submit an appeal* of the director's response to CDE's Requests for Evaluation of Library Materials.

What Has Happened Since?

In January 2023, CDE submitted a written appeal to the president of the Glen Ridge Public Library Board of Trustees and the library director. The basis of the appeal is that CDE does not believe these books meet the requirements of Glen Ridge Public Library Book Selection Policy. CDE was told the appeal would be "discussed" in open meeting on February 8, 2023, and the board's response would be communicated *privately* via the mail to the individuals filing the appeal.

On January 24th, an organization identified as Glen Ridge United Against Book Bans rolled out a public relations campaign against CDE and its members that included petitions, lawn signs, t-shirts, tv, print and social media. They spun a narrative that CDE wanted to ban gender/transgender and race-affirming books and accused us of bringing potential harm to the LGBTQ community by making Glen Ridge an "unsafe" and "unwelcoming" town via this supposed "book ban." They enlisted outside organizations like Out Montclair and created a mob-like response with upwards of 800 people attending our hearing. We, ourselves, were not able to attend due to the escalating messages we were receiving on social media and our website where we were being accused of being homophobic, racist, hateful bigots.

What Does CDE Want From This Process?

CDE hoped the Glen Ridge Public Library Board of Trustees and director would have put guardrails in place to provide parents more oversight and control over materials their children come into contact with in the Glen Ridge Public Library. Instead, all members of the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to keep the books we raised concern over in the library and did not consider moving them to a place where children would not come into casual contact with them. This "vote" was not done in private as was told to us but in the Ridgewood Avenue School auditorium before an audience of 800. We subsequently received notification from the board and director that our appeal had been denied.

To this day, no one from the library, superintendent or mayor's office has addressed any of our concerns regarding the material in the books or the points made in our six-page appeal.