



WHEN FORMAL OBJECTIONS FAIL: SPEAKING UP AT FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS ABOUT HARMFUL BOOKS

When a formal book objection fails to result in the removal of inappropriate material, public comment can be a valuable next step in the effort to protect children from harmful content. Whether a book has been retained after review or your district has been slow to respond, public speaking at a school board meeting allows parents, pastors, and concerned citizens to raise awareness, show community support, and call on school boards to do better in protecting children.

This resource equips you to take that next step confidently. It will guide you through how to prepare your remarks and deliver them effectively, so your message is clear, respectful, and compelling. Public comment bolsters accountability by ensuring your concerns about inappropriate material remain visible to both the public and decision-makers responsible for school library oversight.

1 KNOW YOUR PURPOSE

- o Before attending, be clear about what you want to accomplish:
 - Are you urging the board to take action on a specific book?
 - Are you educating the public about harmful content?
 - Are you showing community support for parental rights?
- o Define your goal and let that shape your remarks.



2 PREPARE YOUR STATEMENT

- o Stick to time limits. Most districts allow for 1–3 minutes for public comment. This is usually announced at the beginning of the meeting, so be sure to listen carefully.
- o To avoid being cut off, time yourself beforehand.
- o Write out your remarks. Even if you plan to speak freely, a written copy helps you stay on track.
- o Lead with impact. Use your opening sentence to grab attention.
- o Be specific. Mention the book title, its availability in your local school, and why it is inappropriate.

WHEN FORMAL OBJECTIONS FAIL: SPEAKING UP AT FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS ABOUT HARMFUL BOOKS

3 REFERENCE APPLICABLE LAW OR POLICY

To strengthen your remarks, consider referencing specific statutes that define or describe content that may be considered obscene, sexually explicit, or otherwise harmful to minors.¹

For example, you might say:

"According to Florida Statute 847.012, it is unlawful to provide minors with material that is considered harmful, obscene, or sexually explicit. Based on the content of this book, I am concerned it may fall within the type of material this statute addresses."

For this reason, when possible, connect the content of the book to definitions and standards laid out in state law. Below are three key statutes commonly referenced when objecting to school library materials:

- o **Section 847.012, Florida Statutes – Prohibited materials harmful to minors:** This statute prohibits the knowing sale or distribution of obscene or sexually explicit materials harmful to minors. It includes criminal penalties and serves as a key standard for evaluating what content may be inappropriate for children in educational settings.
 - **Example remark (if applicable):** *"Florida Statute 847.012 prohibits providing minors with materials that are harmful, obscene, or sexually explicit. After reviewing this book, I have serious concerns that its content may fall into one or more of these categories."*
- o **Section 847.001(19), Florida Statutes – Definition of "Sexual Conduct":** This statute defines the term "sexual conduct" used in Florida obscenity laws. It includes descriptions of sexual intercourse, masturbation, and lewd exhibition of genitals—criteria that help identify what kind of material may be considered harmful to minors.
 - **Example remark (if applicable):** *"Florida law defines 'sexual conduct' to include things like sexual intercourse, masturbation, and lewd exhibition of genitals. This book contains descriptions that appear to include some of these types of content, which raises concerns about its appropriateness for minors."*
- o **Section 1006.28(2)(b), Florida Statutes – Oversight of School Library Materials:** This provision requires school districts to ensure that materials available in classrooms and libraries are not pornographic, do not depict or describe sexual conduct (as defined above), and are age-appropriate and suitable for student comprehension. This establishes the expectation that school library content should reflect community standards and educational relevance.
 - **Example remark (if applicable):** *"Under Florida Statute 1006.28, school boards are responsible for ensuring that school library materials do not include pornography or depictions of sexual conduct, and that all content is age-appropriate and suitable for students. After reviewing this book, I am concerned that some of its content may not meet these requirements for appropriateness and suitability."*

¹DISCLAIMER: This resource is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The information contained herein should not be relied upon as a substitute for legal counsel.

WHEN FORMAL OBJECTIONS FAIL: SPEAKING UP AT FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS ABOUT HARMFUL BOOKS

4 PRACTICAL TIPS FOR DELIVERY

- o Be respectful and confident.
- o Speak clearly and slowly. Even in a time-restricted format, clarity matters.
- o Avoid partisan or aggressive language. Focus on protecting children, not attacking others.

5 REMEMBER THAT PUBLIC COMMENT IS ONLY ONE PART OF THE PROCESS

- o While public comment is a powerful tool for raising awareness and putting issues on the record, it is not a substitute for filing a formal objection through your school district's review process.
- o If your goal is to seek the actual removal or restriction of harmful materials, you must follow your district's established procedures for submitting formal objections and appeals. Without this, your concerns may not trigger an official review, as school officials are only obligated to act when you follow the established process.
- o For additional guidance on this subject, see our resource [**Tips for Attending School Board Meetings.**](#)

