



We stood up for intellectual freedom.  
The BOE left us out in the cold.

## DEMAND THE RIGHT TO READ @ NORTH HUNTERDON-VOORHEES

Concerned community members showed up on Jan. 23 to stop censorship and tell the board to protect staff from harassment. The board adjourned the meeting without hearing our concerns.

Show up and speak up at the next meeting. Bring friends. Wear red.



### NH-V BOE meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 30, 7 p.m.  
North Hunterdon HS auditorium  
1445 Route 31, Annandale

[tinycloud.com/s/supportNHVstaff](https://tinycloud.com/s/supportNHVstaff)



## Get set for the NH-V Board Meeting!

Jan. 30, 2024

7:00 p.m. (arrive by 6:45 p.m.)

North Hunterdon HS auditorium, 1445 Route 31, Annandale, NJ

*(Enter via the Regional Rd entrance to NHHS; auditorium is directly through the main doors under the giant NORTH HUNTERDON HIGH SCHOOL letters)*

### Logistical tips

1. **Familiarize yourself with the situation.** See the [Background](#) information below.
2. **Arrive by 6:45;** sit toward the front with other participants wearing red.
3. **Don't engage with agitators.** Some extremists in attendance will be wearing body cameras and will attempt to provoke you. Don't take the bait. Simply walk away.
4. **Bring a sign.** Address the themes of the right to read OR support for the library/librarian. Use red, white, and blue colors and/or flag symbols. Wave your sign immediately before and after a known ally speaks.
5. **Prepare remarks in advance;** this is not the time to improvise. See the [Talking Points](#) bank below. The speaking limit is 3 minutes, but consider preparing a shorter version, too, in case the board cuts time to 2 minutes.
6. **State your name, municipality, and the name of any organization** you may represent. This is normal, required procedure.
7. **Address the Board,** not people in the audience. Board members will not respond to public comment. Do not expect a conversation. You are making a statement for the public record. This is common Board procedure.
8. **Speak calmly, professionally, and respectfully.** Along with your words, your behavior sends a message. No shouting out. No rude comments.

Learn more at [Unite Against Book Bans](#)



## LIBRARY DEFENDERS

### Harassment of North Hunterdon-Voorhees staff & attacks on the freedom to read

#### The situation

- **Attacks on books have resumed.** At the November NH-V BOE meeting, failed BOE candidate [Eric Licwinko stumbled through a performance of manufactured outrage](#), reading out-of-context passages from [Let's Talk About It](#), a sex education book presented in graphic novel format. This was likely just the opening salvo in a broader attack on an as-yet-unnamed list of more than 50 books that Licwinko's associate Christopher Stadulis (husband of new board member Cynthia Reyes-Stadulis), claims to have targeted for removal from the library. Licwinko, Stadulis, and Reyes-Stadulis were all involved in the unsuccessful 2021-2022 attempt to ban five LGBTQ+ books from district libraries.

- **Harassment of the NHHS librarian.** On Jan. 13, 2024, Christopher Stadulis, husband of BOE member Cynthia Reyes-Stadulis, weaponized Licwinko's November BOE rant into an attack against the NHHS librarian, which he posted to his "[Hunterdon County Project](#)" page and to the extremist [NJ Schools Facebook group](#), of which he is an administrator. He tagged the NJ Schools post so that all 14.1K members of that group would be notified. Stadulis' post has generated [numerous hateful comments](#) and incited [this email to the librarian's school account](#). The sender of the email is a commenter on Stadulis' Facebook post and is associated with a company that distributes tactical shooting gear. The librarian has notified the district of harassment by Stadulis three times in the last year; the district has taken no action.

**UPDATE:** On Jan. 17, 2024, Stadulis posted a [second harassing video](#) to the same Facebook pages. In the video, he targets the NHHS librarian, a supportive community member, and every BOE member – past and present – who refused to ban books.

**UPDATE:** On Jan. 23, more than 150 community members packed the tiny NH-V board office to express concern about this situation. Despite knowing that a crowd would come to the meeting, the district failed to move it to a larger location. The board adjourned the meeting without hearing from the public.

- **Suitability of Mrs. Reyes-Stadulis.** Given the involvement of her husband in harassing the librarian, it is inappropriate for Mrs. Reyes-Stadulis to be involved in board discussions or decisions regarding library operations or staff. She must either recuse herself or the board must bar her from such items.

by Kelly Jensen, editor *BookRiot*

## How to take action

1. Attend the next NH-V BOE meeting to support the right to read and defend all staff against harassment. **Please wear red.** Consider making a statement (3 minutes or less) during public comments.

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2. Send an email to district leaders; **include a statement at the top stating “PLEASE READ ALOUD DURING PUBLIC COMMENTS”**

- Board president Glen Farbanish ([gfarbanish@nhvweb.net](mailto:gfarbanish@nhvweb.net))
- Superintendent Jeffrey Bender ([jbender@nhvweb.net](mailto:jbender@nhvweb.net))
- Principal Greg Cottrell ([gcottrell@nhvweb.net](mailto:gcottrell@nhvweb.net))

3. Call the board office at 908-735-2846 to demand students' right to read and protection of school staff from harassment by the households of BOE members. Sample script:

*Hello. I am NAME. I am aware that the district is once again experiencing demands to remove a book from school libraries and that these actions come with Facebook posts harassing the school librarian. I ask that the administration and board:*

- *Protect students' right to read*
- *Keep your staff safe, and*
- *Ensure that board members whose households engage in harassment do not have the privilege of discussing or voting on matters affecting related school operations or personnel. Thank you.*

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## TALKING POINTS

### Freedom to read

- All students deserve to see themselves and the diversity of lived experience reflected in their school libraries.
- School libraries are centers for voluntary inquiry. All students are entitled to freely choose or ignore materials in the school library.
- Books are tools for understanding complex issues; restricting students' access to books does not protect them from those issues.
- Information about sex is relevant to teenagers; it is not inherently obscene or pornographic.
- Obscenity is a legal term that can be determined only by a judge and jury and requires satisfaction of [all three parts of the Miller Test](#).
- In the current case, [Let's Talk About It](#), a sex-education book presented in graphic novel format, has received uniformly positive reviews from professional review sources. It contains

## ← Harassment background

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those decisions for other families.

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### **Bullying and harassment**

- Librarians and teachers are being bullied by the same bad actors who want to take away bullying protections for kids.
  - The district teaches our students who witness acts of bullying and harassment to be upstanders, not just bystanders. To take action by telling the bully to stop, offering help to the victim, and serving as a role model so that others will know how to show the same compassion.
  - District leaders have repeatedly failed to take a stand against the harassment of the librarian, beginning in Sept. 2021, when they refused to refute false claims of “grooming” made by the same segment of the community involved in the current situation.
  - When will the leaders in this district model upstander behavior for our students and our community? By not speaking out about this harassment of staff, district leaders are part of the problem.
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### **Protection of staff**

- School administrators are responsible for ensuring a safe and supportive learning and working environment for students and staff.
  - [Policy 0142](#) states board members’ ethical obligation to staff: “Support and protect school personnel in the proper performance of their duties”
  - Reasonable people can disagree about the value of instructional materials or library books. There is no need to attack the professionalism or integrity of staff members.
  - Librarians are professionals who hold master’s degrees in library and information science. They are trained in youth literature and library collection development and management. Their training and experience deserve respect, not derision.
  - American Library Association President Emily Drabinski has said, “The collection development decisions [librarians] make are fundamentally professional decisions. I don’t cut my own hair; when I do it’s a mistake. I don’t try to plumb my own house or do my own electricity. We shouldn’t have people who aren’t librarians making decisions about what goes in library collections.”
  - In the current case, the librarian has consistently operated in compliance with board policies, her district job description, and the high standards of the library profession. And she has done so with excellence, as demonstrated by 19 years’ of outstanding performance evaluations and numerous awards from state and national library associations, evidence that has been readily available to district leaders but unstated throughout the two-and-a-half years of these attacks.
  - In permitting the ongoing harassment of the librarian, district administrators and the board have been negligent in their responsibilities to staff.
  - Board members whose households engage in harassment of staff must recuse themselves from discussion or decisions related to the staff member and their work, or the board must bar the board member from involvement on such items.
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### **Policy/process compliance**

- Policies and processes exist for community members to raise concerns about staff or library materials; these are outlined under [Policy](#) and [Regulation 9130](#).

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- District representatives say, “There are no book discussions on the meeting agenda.” Book banning is **ALWAYS** on the table when the board allows its public comments microphone to be used as the entry point for book complaints as it did in November 2023, April 2023, and most notoriously September 2021.
- District administrators and board officers must redirect complaining community members to the appropriate policies and processes as outlined under Policy and Regulation 9130. [The librarian even designed a decision tree to help guide you](#), but the board has refused to use that document.
- Failure to redirect complaining community members turns the board into the district’s de facto complaint department rather than the court of last resort, which should be its role in an escalation process designed to resolve disputes in an efficient and respectful fashion.

[North Hunterdon-Voorhees Intellectual Freedom Fighters](#)