

RESOLUTION DECLARING THE CRANFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY TO BE A BOOK SANCTUARY

WHEREAS, the freedom to read is a human right, constitutionally protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, and individuals have the right to free inquiry and the equally important right to form their own opinions; and

WHEREAS, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”; and

WHEREAS, books do not require readers to agree with topics or themes but instead allow readers to explore and engage with differing perspectives to form and inform their own views; and

WHEREAS, over the last several years, there has been a significant increase in censorship activities in the United States resulting in books being removed from library shelves and schools; and

WHEREAS, book bans often seek to impose restrictions based on the political, ideological, or cultural preferences of the individuals calling for book bans; and

WHEREAS, book bans have multifaceted, harmful consequences on—
(A) residents who have a right to access a diverse range of stories and perspectives;
(B) residents from historically marginalized backgrounds, whose communities are often underrepresented in literature;
(C) library workers who are operating in an increasingly punitive and surveillance-oriented environment with a chilling effect on reading and learning;
(D) the authors whose works are being targeted; and
(E) parents who want to raise children in communities that remain open to curiosity, discovery, and the freedom to read; and

WHEREAS, classic and award-winning literature and books that have been part of our literary tradition for decades have been challenged, removed from libraries pending review, or outright banned from libraries, including “Brave New World” by Aldous Huxley, “The Handmaid’s Tale” by Margaret Atwood, “Anne Frank’s Diary: The Graphic Adaptation”, “Their Eyes Were Watching God” by Zora Neale Hurston, and “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee; and

WHEREAS, books, particularly those written by and about outsiders, newcomers, and people from marginalized backgrounds, are facing heightened risk of being banned; and

WHEREAS, numerous books referring to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and plus (“LGBTQ+”) themes or with LGBTQ+ characters have been banned in the United States this year, including children’s books such as “Families, Families, Families!” and “All Are Welcome”, which recognize the equal humanity and dignity of all persons, despite our differences; and

WHEREAS, numerous books, both fiction and nonfiction, with protagonists of color or prominent secondary characters of color have been banned in the United States, including “Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story,” “Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washington”, “Thank You, Jackie Robinson”, “Malala: A Hero For All”, “Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story”, “Hair Love”, “Good Trouble: Lessons from the Civil Rights Playbook”, and “We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures”; and

WHEREAS, numerous bills have been introduced across the country that would restrict books and curricula on race and gender in schools and

WHEREAS, the Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees declare their opposition to the banning of books in any form; and

WHEREAS, the Cranford Public Library previously adopted the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers Freedom to Read Statement; and

WHEREAS, the Cranford Public Library has a material selection process that is fair, deliberative, equitable, and accessible to the public as set forth in its Collection Development Policy adopted by the Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees of the Cranford Public Library, as follows:

Section 1. Recitals Incorporated. The above recitals are incorporated herein as though fully set forth.

Section 2. Book Sanctuary Declaration. The Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees declare that the Cranford Public Library is a book sanctuary library.

Section 3. Book Sanctuary Library. As a book sanctuary library, the Cranford Public Library shall be a place where everyone can: (1) borrow and read challenged books; (2) make endangered books accessible to everyone; (3) host book talks, story times, and other events about banned and challenged books; and (4) educate others on the history of book banning and burning.

Section 4. Book Sanctuary Actions. The Board of Trustees declare Cranford Public Library to be a book sanctuary library and call upon community members to do the following: (1) host and join in-person or virtual banned book clubs to encourage critical discussion of censored stories, starting with Black, Indigenous, People of Color (“BIPOC”) and LGBTQ+ stories that are most often challenged; (2) lending banned books to friends and neighbors; (3) using local Little Free Libraries as book sanctuaries, adding banned books as a way to support the freedom to read; (4) facilitating a book drive for banned and challenged books and donating books to local community centers, including the Friends of the Cranford Public Library, for distribution at Little Free Libraries in the community; and (5) hosting story times with inclusive characters that reflect the diversity of our world.

Section 5. Effective Date. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately after its passage and publication as provided by law.