***NOTE: the challenge to which this letter responds requested that the challenged book not be displayed anywhere in the Children’s Room; it did not specifically request removal of the book. Depending on the specifics of your challenge, it may still be wise to preclude the possibility of removing the book, even if that was not requested by the challenger. In the letter below, the Board decided both to reaffirm that the book will stay AND that the book remains eligible for display.***

***You may also wish to preview the letter with a member of the staff at ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, particularly if you need help with wording in particular places. Remember that the ALA OIF folks are not lawyers, though. Make sure that your library’s attorney approves the final draft of your letter.***

***-Lisa Laico, Warwick***

Dear [ ],

On behalf of the [ XXX Library] Board of Trustees, I am writing in response to your request for reconsideration of the display of the children’s book [XXX] by [XXX]. Thank you for submitting the reconsideration form [and for voicing your opinion at the Board of Trustees meeting on X date].

You expressed that you found the display of the book offensive and inappropriate. Although neither the book nor its display was intended to be provocative, we do acknowledge that perspective. By policy, the Library does not act *in loco parentis* – in place of the parent. You have the right to control what library materials your children read, watch, or listen to, following your values. That right does not extend, however, to other families’ options. Just as you would not want another parent to limit your child’s access to materials you prefer, parents with viewpoints different from yours will rightfully object to limits on their choices.

Materials displayed in libraries encompass a wide variety of ideas, views, and lived experiences. Just as with books on the shelf, books on display may be of more interest to some community members than to others.  Libraries display books, including books about underrepresented or historically-marginalized groups such as LGBTQIA+ individuals, to let patrons know about the diversity of materials in the Library’s collection.  Disallowing the display of materials based on the gender or sexual identity of the author, or of the characters represented, would violate the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and would also subject the Library to claims under the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Library exists to serve equally all taxpayers of the [XXX library’s service area], and strives to accommodate their diverse tastes, perspectives and preferences. Among all collections, including the children’s materials, patrons borrow what appeals to them and disregard the rest. The existence or display of a given book does not constitute the Library’s endorsement of what is between its covers. That judgment is the privilege of the reader, and in the case of children, their parents.

Members of the Board have read this book cover-to-cover and have considered it in the context of both the Library’s materials selection and display policies. These policies follow the principles of the American Library Association and are anchored in the First Amendment.

All of this taken into consideration, the Board’s final decision reaffirms this book’s place in the parenting section of the children’s collection. Future display of this title will be at a parent’s eye level and, as with all displays, it will be temporary.

We trust that all parents respect the Library’s professional obligation to balance patrons’ and families’ differing preferences.

Sincerely,

[XXX], President