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**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH AND
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Stand with the Banned: Digital Library Cards for California Teens

The number of individual book bans across the country increased by 28% during the first half of the 2022-23 school year compared to the prior six months, according to a new report by PEN America, a 100-year-old nonprofit organization that works to defend and celebrate free expression in the U.S. and worldwide through the advancement of literature and human rights. Book bans are happening at an alarming rate not only throughout the country but in our own backyard.

The number of banned books in California is on the rise. In 2020, the Burbank Unified School District banned inclusion of classics such as “Huckleberry Finn” by Mark Twain and “Of Mice and Men” by John Steinbeck from their curriculum. We’ve seen concerted efforts to do the same in other parts of the state, such as the San Ramon Valley Unified School District in the Bay Area and Kingsburg Elementary Charter School District in the Central Valley whose book challenge policy allows for a book's immediate removal in response to a single parent's objection. The trend is so alarming that recently Governor Gavin Newsom, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond issued a letter to school districts statewide cautioning against book bans.

According to the American Library Association, almost all of the top 10 books targeted for

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censorship last year in California schools and libraries included LGBTQ+ themes. The LGBTQ+ community has increasingly come under fire in recent months. The Temecula Valley Unified School District Board of Trustees recently fired their superintendent for including LGBTQ+ civil rights icon Harvey Milk in the school curriculum, which is in accordance with state law under the FAIR Education Act which mandates all California schools to include LGBTQ+ history in their curricula.

Now, more than ever, as Pride Month comes to a close, the County of Los Angeles must stand with the banned-the students who are deprived of the literature that reflects the diversity of our great state-and make our eBook resources available to all California teens and residents. LA County Library has been nationally recognized for its award-winning work in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as breaking down barriers to access, and is therefore well positioned to support freedom to read for teens across California.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the LA County Library to report back to the Board in thirty days with a plan to establish a program which makes digital library cards available to all residents and teens in California to be launched during Banned Books Week (October 1-7, 2023), including working with the CEO, as well as the Center for Strategic Partnerships, to establish a funding source for purchasing the eBook collection (including commonly banned books) and promoting the program; funding sources may include American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds or other one-time funding sources.

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