



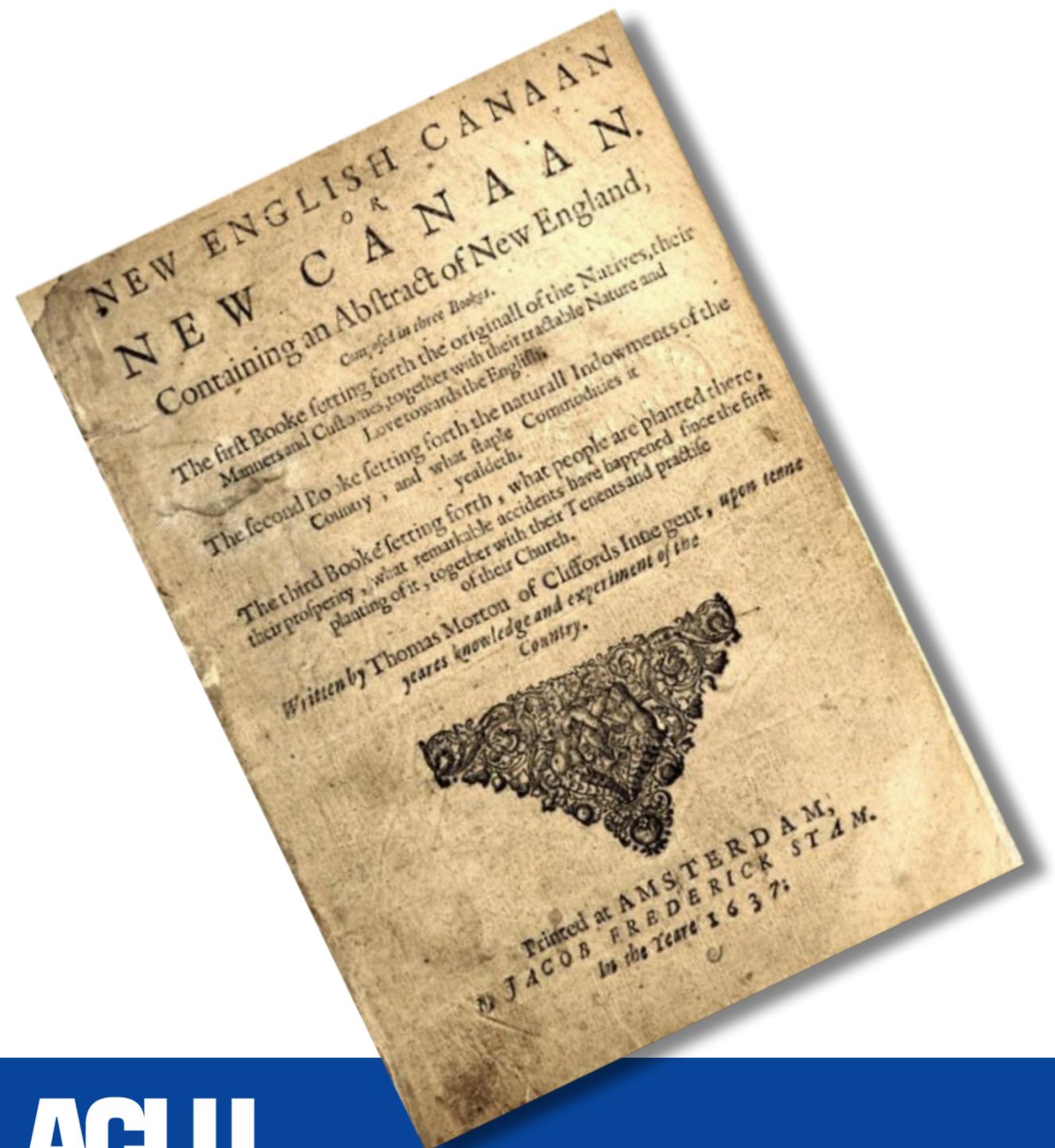
# The Right to Learn

**Combatting Classroom Censorship**

**ACLU**

Massachusetts

# First book banned in the United States:



- Quincy, Massachusetts!
- The New Cannaan by Thomas Morton
- Banned in 1637
- Contained harsh critique of Puritan customs and power structures

**2022:  
Unprecedented  
censorship  
attempts**

**1,269**

demands to censor library books and resources,  
according the ALA

**Almost twice 2021**





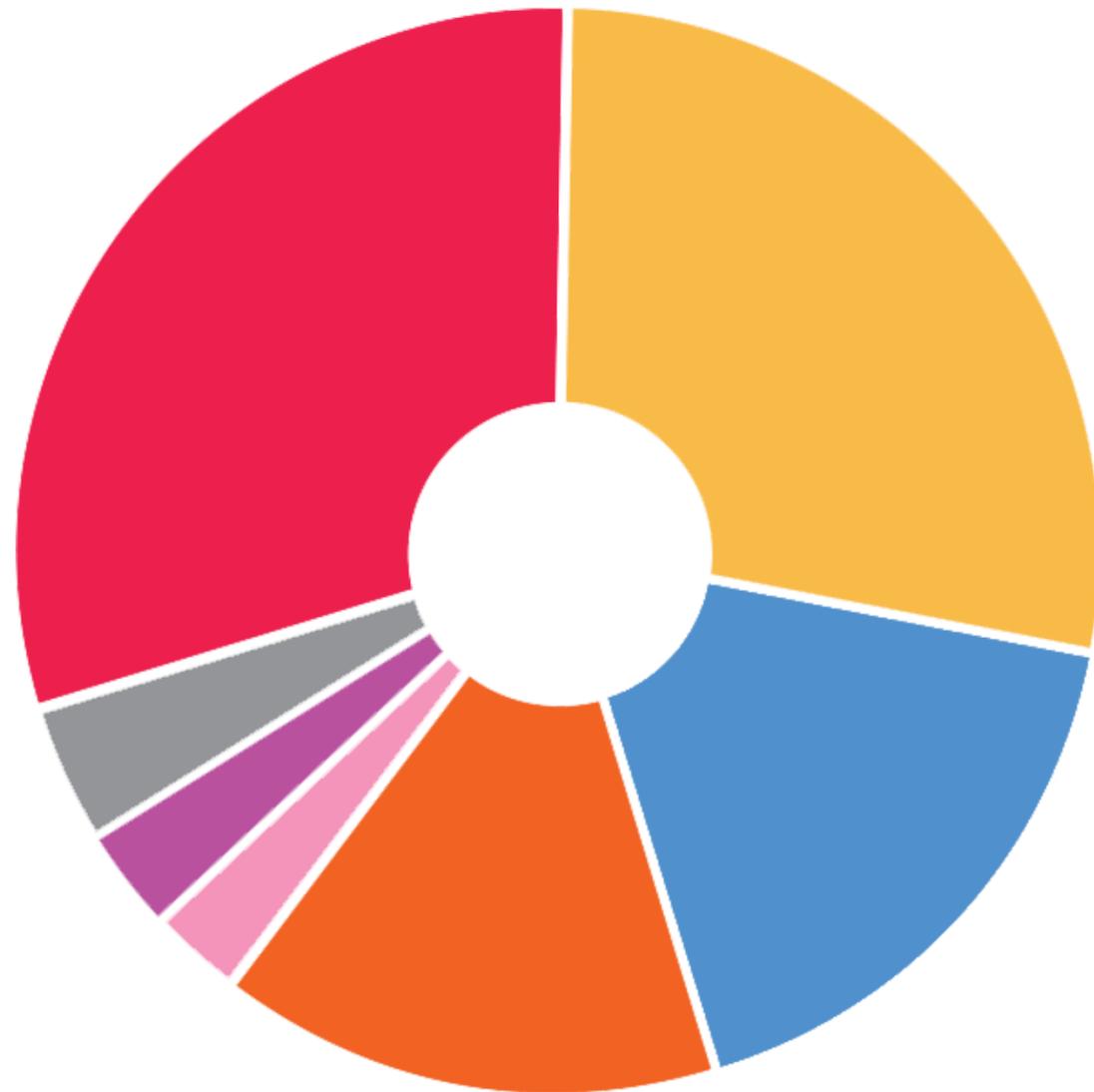
**36**

states introduced book-banning bills

**137**

bills introduced nationwide

# Who initiates book challenges?



**30% Parents**

**28% Patrons**

**17% Political/Religious Groups**

**15% Board/Administration**

**3% Librarians/Teachers**

**3% Elected Officials**

**4% Other (includes non-custodial relatives, nonresidents, community members without library cards, etc.)**

Source: American Library Association -- [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

# Where do challenges take place?



**48%**

**Public Libraries**



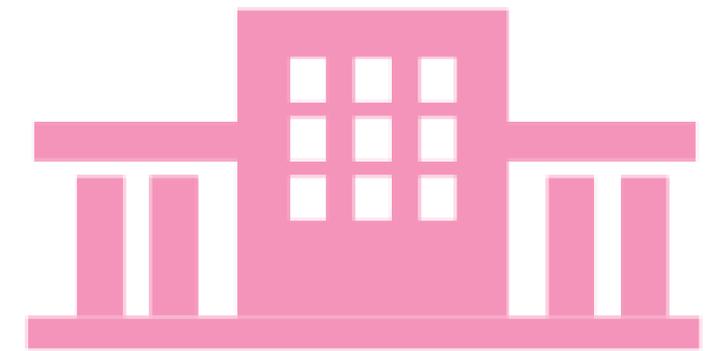
**41%**

**School Libraries**



**10%**

**Schools**



**1%**

**College Libraries /  
Other Public  
Institutions**

Source: American Library Association -- [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

# Massachusetts 2022

**45** attempts to restrict access to books in MA

**57** book titles challenged in MA

# Top 13 Most Banned Books 2022



# Rights and Legal Issues

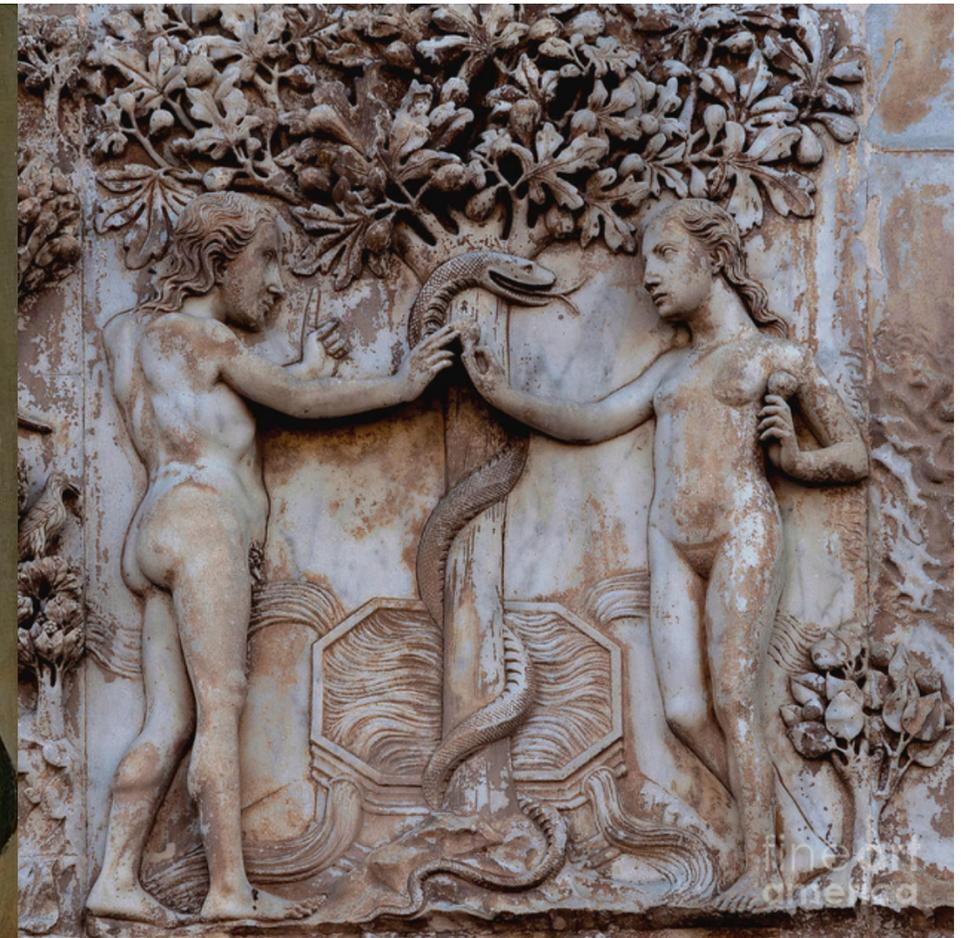
- Equality based on race, national origin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation
- Free speech rights, including the right to receive information
- Diversity in Education as a Bedrock of Democracy



# Ludlow, Mass.

- Proposed policy - any new or replacement library materials are subject to prior review and approval by the Superintendent and, after public input, the School Committee.
- Extremely vague, overbroad, and repressive standards for allowable materials
- Banned materials with “sexualized content” – undefined
- School district employees who do not follow the policy could be terminated.
- Copycat of a Pennsylvania county policy

**These images could have been banned under the proposed Ludlow policy.**

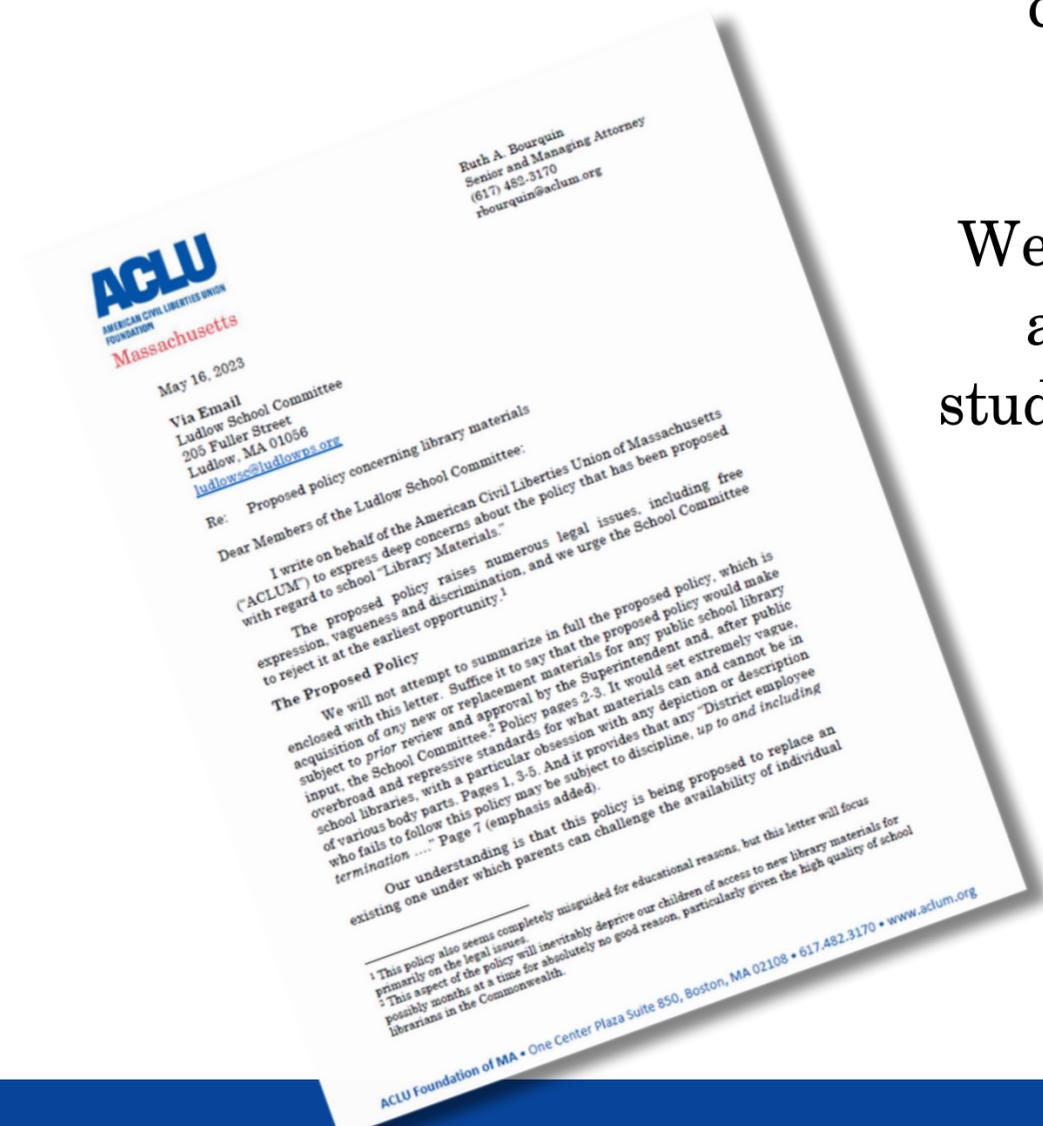


“

“Under this proposed policy, images and descriptions of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden would be categorically banned from elementary school library materials, and librarians seemingly could be fired for choosing to introduce elementary students to the joy of ballet by showing them male ballet dancers performing the Nutcracker.

We urge the Ludlow School Committee to reject this proposed policy, and hope other local officials take note. Such policies undermine students' right to receive an accurate, inclusive education and pave the way for unlawful discrimination.”

”



**Ludlow community members spoke out  
and the Ludlow School Committee  
declined to adopt the proposed policy.**

# ACLU and GLAD letter to Superintendents and School Committees



# Online Toolkit

[aclum.org/en/exercise-your-right-learn](https://aclum.org/en/exercise-your-right-learn)

- **Right to Learn Toolkit**
- **Resist Book Bans**
- **Resist Other Restrictive Policies**
- **Know Your Rights: Back to School**
- **Advocates Academy**



# Take Action!

**SD. 2673**

**An Act regarding free expression**

The bill ensures that public and school libraries can offer diverse and inclusive books, media, and materials without political interference.



<https://mobilize.aclum.org/a/tell-state-lawmakers-protect-students-right-learn>



**Thank you!**

**Laura Rótolo**  
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**ACLU**

**WE THE PEOPLE**