

# Somerset County Public Schools

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## \*\*\*Press Release\*\*\*

For Immediate Release  
August 21, 2026

Media Contact: Ted Gibson  
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### Somerset County Board of Education Welcomes 60-Day Review of Policy 500-19

SOMERSET COUNTY, MARYLAND — August 20, 2026 — The Somerset County Board of Education welcomes the State Superintendent's decision to temporarily stay enforcement of Policy 500-19 for 60 days, allowing additional time for a thorough review of the policy and the facts surrounding its adoption and implementation.

The State Superintendent's order does not interfere with the Board's June 24, 2026, decision authorizing the purchase of more than 1,071 new library books selected by the school system's Media Library Specialists and Supervisors.

Importantly, no library materials have been removed from any Somerset County Public School as a result of this process. The Board did not select or remove individual books. The materials were reviewed and selected by qualified library professionals through the school system's established process.

Policy 500-19 does not ban books such as Harry Potter or any classical pieces of literature with educational value, nor does it prohibit teenagers from reading age-appropriate literature. The policy establishes definitions and provides guidance concerning instructional and library materials while recognizing the rights of parents to raise concerns about materials they believe are inappropriate or conflict with their sincerely held religious beliefs.

The Board also recognizes its obligation to follow established constitutional and legal standards, including applicable United States Supreme Court precedent concerning obscene materials and parental rights.

The Board has a responsibility to manage public funds and determine how many library materials can reasonably be purchased within the adopted budget. The June 24 action was a budgetary authorization to purchase library materials, not an order to remove books from school libraries.

The Board further recognizes Maryland's Freedom to Read Act and its protections concerning library materials. No books were removed because of an author's race, nationality, gender, or place of origin.

The Board welcomes the State Superintendent's review and believes the 60-day period provides an opportunity to distinguish the actual language and implementation of Policy 500-19 from inaccurate characterizations circulating publicly.

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To be clear: Somerset County Public Schools has not banned Harry Potter or any educationally suitable literature, and the Board has not directed school libraries to remove books based upon an author's identity or protected characteristics.

The Board remains committed to protecting students, respecting parents' rights, responsibly managing taxpayer resources, and ensuring that students have access to appropriate and meaningful educational materials.

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