



April 16, 2025

Dear

This letter is in response to the completed Request for Reconsideration form for “Worm Loves Worm” by J.J. Austrian in the Cromaine District Library (CDL) collection. The concern about this title noted on the form was “sexualization/exploitation of children.”

When we met you explained to me that your main goal is to protect children from the subject matter of these particular books, which you broadly defined as containing viewpoints that, in your opinion, “will lead children to confusion about gender.” I explained to you that per library policy, only a parent may restrict what their own children read, and that public bodies may not restrict access to books based on the book’s viewpoint. You indicated that your personal views about gender confusion should take precedence over the rights of other parents in the community with whom you disagree.

After completing a staff review, I have concluded that this title was acquired in accordance with the library’s Materials Selection Policy #3010, which was provided when we discussed your concern in March 2025. This title was first available to community members in December 2016 and has circulated 26 times. It is published by Balzer + Bray. It is shelved in the Picture book section because it is a picture book written for children ages 4-6.

School Library Journal, a professional review source used by librarians when selecting titles, reviewed the title on November 1, 2016. The review reads:

In addition to sharing a first name, Worm and Worm love each other and decide to get married. Their friends have several ideas about what the wedding needs: someone to perform the service, a best beetle, bride's bees, rings, a band, cake, and outfits. When the best beetle and bride's bees start fretting about who is the bride and who is the groom, both worms declare that they are willing to be the bride and the groom. Cricket the officiant declares that's not how it's done, but Worm and Worm decide to change tradition and are happily married. With a white backdrop to each page, Curato's pencil and Photoshop illustrations convey the emotions each creature feels as it makes elaborate plans for the wedding. The story is nicely paced and can be a great way to introduce children to what might happen at a wedding. Most important, though, are the subtle yet effective messages of what's important when two individuals decide to wed.
VERDICT With its cute critters, sweet story, and messages of equality, this is a first purchase that celebrates the fact that love always wins.

Additionally, Kirkus Reviews, a professional review source used by librarians when selecting titles, reviewed the title on September 20, 2015. They awarded it a starred review, indicating the reviewer felt the title was an outstanding example for the genre. The review reads:

Austrian and Curato turn the simple wedding of two worms into a three-ring circus that slyly turns the whole controversy over same-sex versus heterosexual marriage on its head.

“Worm loves Worm. ‘Let’s be married,’ says Worm to Worm. ‘Yes!’ answers Worm. ‘Let’s be married.’ ” Seems simple to the two worms but not to the other woodland critters. Cricket insists on officiating. “That’s how it’s always been done” is his oft-repeated refrain. Beetle wants to be

the best beetle, the Bees want to be the bride's bees, the worms must wear rings, and they need a band to dance to, flowers, and a cake. The intendeds solve all these issues as well as the question of who's the bride, who's the groom. " 'I can be the bride,' says Worm. 'I can, too,' says Worm." They both are also the groom. One wears a veil, bow tie, gold ring, and black trousers; the other sports a top hat, gold ring, and flouncy white skirt. The wedding party is in awe, save uptight Cricket. " 'We'll just change how it's done,' says Worm." And so they do, and they are married at last... "because Worm loves Worm." Curato's pencil-and-Photoshop illustrations use white backgrounds to great effect, keeping the characters front and center. The two worms are differentiated only by their eyes: one has black dots, and the other has white around the black dots. As in life, love conquers all. (Picture book. 3-8)

CDL's Policy #3010, Section V part B. notes that "Responsibility for the reading material of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection shall not be inhibited solely by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children. The Library respects each individual parent's right to supervise his/her children's choice of reading materials. However, the Library does not have the right to act in loco parentis (in place of the parent). Therefore, a parent who chooses to restrict the materials his/her children select must accompany those children when they use the collection to impose those restrictions. Juvenile material may be labeled with non-prejudicial, viewpoint-neutral labels.

Review has deemed that a genre label of "social issues" is appropriate, and therefore has been applied to "Worm Loves Worm."

C. The Library Director is responsible for overseeing where the books are shelved and catalogued. However, the Library Board recommends that any materials that are appropriate for adults or older teens but may be considered harmful to minors, as defined by the Library Privacy Act, are shelved within the adult collection.

Review has deemed that this content does not fit the definition of "harmful to minors" in [MCL722.674 sec.4](#). Therefore, "Worm Loves Worm" will be retained in the youth picture book section of the library.

Policy #3010 provides a protocol to appeal of this decision in Section IX Part F: written appeal of the Library Director's decision may be made by the Requester to the Chair of the Library Board within ten (10) business days after the written decision is made by the Library Director. The appeal must include the specific Library Material being appealed and the reason that the Requester would like the decision reversed. Please direct an appeal to:

William Bolin
President, Cromaine District Library Board of Trustees
PO Box 308
3688 N. Hartland Rd.
Hartland, MI 48353

The Library Board will review any documentation it deems necessary to decide within sixty (60) days of receipt of the appeal. The Library Board may issue an additional extension if necessary in order to fully evaluate the material.

CDL's Board of Trustees delegates collection development responsibilities to the library director. A staff of librarians with advanced degrees and professional credentials make collection development decisions for CDL. Ultimately, however, the responsibility of what a child reads rests with parents and guardians. Public libraries cannot be expected to interfere with parental obligations and responsibilities when it comes to deciding what a minor may read, listen to, or view. It is the right of parent/guardian to determine

what materials are available for their children to read.

The Cromaine District Library serves 30,000 people in Hartland Township and portions of Brighton, Deerfield, Genoa, Oceola and Tyrone Townships. Library patrons come from a wide variety of religious, political, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Members of our community are well educated and possess a broad range of interests. Not every item the library offers will be enjoyed by every reader, listener, or viewer, but there is something for everyone at the public library. I respect your personal taste in materials and encourage you to ask CDL librarians to recommend titles that more closely match your interests.

Best,

Sarah Neidert
Director, Cromaine District Library