



April 17, 2025

Dear

This letter is in response to the completed Request for Reconsideration form for “What are Your Words?” by Katherine Locke in the Cromaine District Library (CDL) collection. I understand that a group of individuals helped you fill out these forms. We discussed at our second meeting that while each person filling out the forms selected that they represent themselves as an “individual” rather than “organization” because you are not a formal group, but a group of like-minded friends with similar concerns. You indicated that you may speak for the group and that I may communicate directly with you.

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 October 2021 and has circulated 5 times. It is published by Hachette Book Group. It is shelved in the youth picture book section because it is a picture book written for children ages 4-8.

School Library Journal, a professional review source used by librarians when selecting titles, reviewed the title on August 1, 2021. They awarded it a starred review, indicating the reviewer felt the title was an outstanding example for the genre. The review reads:

Ari’s Uncle Lior comes to visit and the pair walk through town to a neighborhood summer bash. Uncle Lior uses they/them pronouns, and they make a habit of always asking Ari, “What are your words?” Sometimes Ari knows which pronouns feel just right, but on this day it’s tricky to decide. On the way to the bash, Ari introduces Uncle Lior to everyone in town using that person’s pronouns, which are illustrated over their head, along with a few words describing their personality. Ari’s family is light brown-skinned, and their neighbors represent a range of skin tones, abilities, and genders. After the bash, Ari invites the reader to share their own words and pronouns after finally settling on they/them pronouns for the day. Passchier’s colorful, geometric digital illustrations match the joyful tone of the text, bringing the whole neighborhood to life. Pronouns from around the world decorate the end papers.

VERDICT An affirming, conversational picture book that models the ease with which our language can adapt to gender diversity and pronoun use. A recommended first purchase for all libraries. PreS-Gr 3. 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 “What are your Words?”

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 this content does not fit the definition of harmful to minors” in [MCL722.674 sec.4](#). Therefore, “What are Your Words?” 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