The University Faculty Council of the University of Mary Washington condemns in the strongest possible terms the attempts by the Spotsylvania school board to circumvent established policies and ban books from its libraries because some board members find the titles of those books contrary to their personal opinion.

We find it especially reprehensible that two school board members are calling for the burning of those books. The burning of books has historically been closely associated with dictatorships such as National-Socialism and the suppression of the freedom of inquiry.

While the school board ultimately changed course on the matter, the call for burning books has now been picked up by groups on social media. The inflammatory language of the board members have found willing executioners.

Consistent with the values of the academy, we encourage responsible, civil, compassionate, and mutually respectful discourse on the difficult topics of identity and history.  We utterly condemn the destruction of public property, and the marginalization of members of our community.  We affirm our commitment to diversity and inclusion, the rights of free inquiry, especially of those seeking to find themselves reflected in the books of school libraries.