

Model Position Paper Draft

Can you imagine going through the rest of your life being told what you can and cannot say? Music artists experience this type of anguish every time a Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics warning label is placed on one of their CDs. However, many parents feel that these labels help them figure out which CDs their children should listen to. As the proprietor of a music store, I have an extremely difficult decision to make. Should the CDs sold in my store that may be considered offensive carry any type of warning labels? The bottom line is that, like any other entrepreneur, I am in the business of making money. Thus, I feel that it is in my best interest to keep warning labels off of any CDs distributed in my shop.

First of all, many music artists are against the placement of warning labels on any of their CDs. They feel that these labels will negatively affect album sales because their work will essentially be marked as offensive or dangerous. In my position, it is pertinent to maintain a good rapport with the artists. When popular musicians such as Kanye West or Maroon 5 make in-store appearances at my shop, my sales increase drastically! If these artists are upset with me over the fact that I opted to place warning labels on their CDs, our business relationships will likely be ruined. Therefore, my sales will diminish.

In 1984 a group of enraged parents and wives of politicians created the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC). This organization was responsible for creating the Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics label. Political wife and PMRC member Tipper Gore stated that the label was created in order to alert the public of “the growing trend in music toward lyrics that are sexually explicit, excessively violent, or glorify the use of alcohol and drugs.” However, as a parent, is it not your job to research the music that your children

are listening to before giving permission for them to purchase it? Parents need to take the responsibility for what their children are listening to instead of placing the onus on record store owners such as myself. If parents research what their children are interested in listening to, then there shouldn't be a need for warning labels.

Regardless of your opinion on the controversial lyrics found on certain CDs, the first amendment of the Bill of Rights gives every American citizen the freedom to speak their mind. But do we really have the freedom of speech when what we say is censored or labeled as dangerous? Warning labels inhibit the artists' voices from being heard, thus negating their freedom of speech. I am a music store owner for a living but I am an American citizen first, and I strongly believe in upholding the laws set forth by the U.S. Constitution. If there are penalties for breaking any other laws then it should not be OK to take away one's freedom of speech by placing warning labels on their works of art.

Realistically, I know that when parents are shopping for CDs for their children and they see warning labels, they turn away. Consequently, my sales are affected. Decreased sales in my shop don't only affect me; they affect the artists, my employees, and their children. In my opinion, the placement of warning labels on CDs is not only unnecessary, it is criminal!