

Testimony Regarding SB 84

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Senator Roblan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tracy Scharn. I'm an instruction librarian at Western Oregon University, and chair of the Information Literacy Group of Oregon (ILAGO). As a librarian, I have also been actively involved in supporting high school students in college credit programs.

ILAGO approached OEIB late last year with concerns regarding library support for accelerated learning programs. Specifically, in college, students have access to college-level materials and to a librarian to teach them how to do research. This is especially important in freshman-level classes, which prepare students for upper level course work. ILAGO's goal is to make sure that high school students receiving college credit have equivalent resources to be successful in their academic life. At OEIB's request, ILAGO conducted a national survey to determine how other states are addressing these issues. The results of that survey have been provided to you in a separate document.

Briefly, regarding access to college-level materials, we found that *only* high school students who are formally dually enrolled in college have access to the same resources as other enrolled college students. Licensing agreements with vendors prohibit nonenrolled high school students from gaining access otherwise. Our survey showed that the top solution to this problem was to rely on a statewide database subscription, which provides access to scholarly and non-scholarly articles on a wide range of subjects to support student work.

Oregon does have a statewide database program. However, it needs to provide information resources for the widest possible number of library patrons in the state, including all K-12 and public libraries. While it does a great job serving the majority of Oregon libraries' needs, it is constrained by bidding requirements where the lowest bid acquires the contract.

Unfortunately, this means that the current statewide databases with the Gale company are not considered sufficient for college-level research. Colleges and universities in Oregon generally elect to pay on their own for access to databases from EBSCO, as their scope, breadth and scholarship level is more appropriate for research at the college level. Again, only formally enrolled students have access to the databases that colleges subscribe to. ILAGO's research showed that the majority of statewide database services with a college-level portal used one of EBSCO's Academic Search databases.

Regarding library instruction for accelerated learning, our survey showed that no one approach was used. Solutions varied, depending on available personnel and relationships between partner institutions. Despite this, respondents repeatedly mentioned that the decline of librarians in public schools was a barrier to supporting high school students in accelerated learning programs. Librarians at colleges, universities and public libraries are attempting to fill the gap, but they identified that this approach was not sustainable; the lack of school librarians needs to be addressed at the state level. Access to college-level materials is not a solution by itself. Students need licensed school librarians to teach them how to engage in research and become information literate so they can be successful in their academic endeavors.

One of the goals of accelerated learning programs is to encourage students to pursue higher education and persist to complete a degree. Research has shown that students who are connected to supportive services are more likely to persist in college. Research has also shown that library resources and library instruction play a key role in student retention and persistence.

Therefore, ILAGO strongly urges the committee to include in SB 84 specific language regarding:

1. Access to college-level materials through a statewide subscription to an EBSCO Academic Search product intended for high school students in accelerated learning programs.
2. A requirement that participating schools have licensed school librarians to teach information literacy and research skills to students.