

## Testimony in support of HB 3263

Hello Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Helt, Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Ricki Ruiz and I am a current school board member for the Reynolds School District. I am also a lifelong resident of Gresham's Rockwood neighborhood who proudly attended the Reynolds School District from kindergarten to fully completing high school graduating in 2012.

As a student, I vividly remember my time spent in school libraries, as I found these spaces to be a positive learning environment. In elementary, I was lucky enough to attend library class every other day. During this time, our librarian would read books to us in both English and Spanish and would allow my classmates and I to check out books to take home and read. Our library was always filled with books that reflected the diversity of our school. Books could be found in English, Spanish, Russian, along with audiobooks in which we could check out to listen during reading and recess time. I can proudly say that I learned to fully read and understand written materials thanks to our school library and staff.

Many of my teachers would work with our elementary librarians to order books that they know we as students would like. I was never disappointed in the selection of books and materials that were provided. Thanks to the resources that existed from 1999 to 2005, I was able to read all my favorite books and improved my reading scores to where I was reading at 5<sup>th</sup> grade level as a second grader. My elementary school librarians and teachers prepared me so well that I was able to read, write, and speak fluent English by 2<sup>nd</sup> grade as well. As I progressed to middle school, I tested out of the English Learning Development class in 6<sup>th</sup> grade being able to read and write fluently in English.

The library space grew as I moved to middle school. The book selections expanded, and I found myself using the library space not only to read but to also feel at peace. Middle school was not an easy transition as I began to see and experience bigger class sizes, fights, and I felt overwhelmed. The majority of my 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I spent my lunchtime in the library trying to avoid what was happening out in the hallways. As I moved to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I began to see a change as many staff were let go which included many classroom teachers and school library staff. For periods of time, I could not access the library due to staff shortages. Once I moved to high school, not much changed. The library only had 1 staff for a school of close to 3000 students. The attention that I once got as an elementary student and part of middle school were far-gone.

Now, as a school board member, I made it a habit to go back to each of our schools. It disappoints me to see how our school libraries are not fully being invested in. Library class is not what it used to be in where we had close to an hour to listen to

stories and roam around the library to read and check out books. Many of our libraries also struggle to fill their bookshelves with books. We need an investment in education in where our libraries can come back in being what they used to be. I was able to succeed in school, and a big part of that was made possible thanks to the librarians and the space and knowledge they provided. I want our students to get those experiences that I once got as a student. Every child in our state should have access to a strong school library program staffed by a team of both a certified librarian and a classified library assistant on a school site in order to deliver state library media standards and support other school instruction and programming, have strong funding to build a collection that meets the instructional and reading needs of all students and staff, as well as providing access to up-to-date technology.

As a former student and a current school board member of the Reynolds School District, I fully support HB 3263 in order to create more concrete language in statute to guide districts across the state toward the development of strong school libraries via each District's Continuous Improvement Plan.

Sincerely,

Ricki Ruiz  
Reynolds School Board  
Community Advocate