

Submitter: John Replinger  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB1075

PLEASE SUPPORT SB 1075! Frankly, I am ANGRY, DISCOURAGED, and ASHAMED at the historical lack of support for school libraries and media programs across Oregon. School librarian positions across Oregon have been steadily cut to save a little money and replaced with untrained personnel who have ZERO library experience and minimal technology experience.

My wife has worked at a middle school library in Salem as a media specialist for several years. Only a handful or two of her peers were certified librarians in the entire school district like she was. I heard story after story about her uncertified peers who struggled to support student and teacher research because they DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO RESEARCH THEMSELVES! They would refer students to the school district for technology help or the Salem Public Library for difficult research because "it was above their pay grade." They rarely taught information literacy skills to their students and more than one scoffed at the idea.

In comparison, my wife regularly met with classes to teach research skills, ethics with information and technology, information literacy standards, created a maker space program, brought in authors for the entire school, served as a reader advisory, participated in book clubs, and made her school a much richer place. She served as the technology go-to person, coordinated classroom use for hundreds of Chromebooks, and checked out hundreds of textbooks monthly. She did all of this and more while being paid half the salary as a certified librarian and with no support.

It is tempting to brush this off as a difference of personalities, but the truth is that this divide occurs frequently between certified librarians and those who are not. My children have experienced both scenarios. I have close friends who are frustrated with the lack of research support from their schools. Not all of them have the social support or ability to go where their children can receive research support; this is a severe equity problem for Oregon.

I am a librarian at Willamette University who meets regularly with incoming students. Those from Oregon often arrive underprepared and unskilled to do real research compared to their peers from out of state. Many Oregon students' idea of "research" is Google. The stark difference is embarrassing, and I shudder to think about what our students face when they attend college outside of Oregon.

Let's put things differently. What school position touches all academic disciplines? The library. It doesn't matter if a student is researching specific histories, social

ideals, musicians, sustainability issues, or cutting-edge scientific research. Trained, certified librarians are there to assist however they can and help students succeed. Why would schools cut this central position? Because they can get away with it.

We need to toughen the standards that schools need to adhere to. There are only 140 certified school librarians left in the entire state (down from 800+), mostly for high schools. We need a full-time certified school librarian for each of our schools. We need better standards for school media programs. We need appropriate staffing levels for school libraries. Plenty of research correlates a strong library program with increased student academic achievement and graduation rates (10% increase, for example). The evidence is clear and this should be a no-brainer. Oregon needs to set higher priorities. It is time to do something and bring librarians back!

I strongly urge you to support SB 1075 to establish school media program standards and provide technical assistance for these standards.  
I thank you for your time and support.

Respectfully submitted, John Replinger