



April 25, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Rules

From: Reed Scott-Schwalbach, Oregon Education Association

RE: Support SJR 33

Chair Lieber and members of the committee,

My name is Reed Scott-Schwalbach, high school Spanish teacher and the president of the 41,000 member Oregon Education Association. I am here to express our support for Senate Joint Resolution 33. Students and educators are facing attacks on their fundamental freedoms all across the country. Oregon should be proud to be a state where it is clear that everyone deserves a life free from discrimination.

SJR 33 will enshrine our core values of respect for individual rights in the Oregon constitution and ensure that we can make deeply personal decisions with our families and doctors, including the right to family planning, contraception, abortion and same-gender marriage. If passed, this bill will give Oregonians the opportunity to vote on the Equal Rights for All measure in November 2024.

As a long-time educator in Oregon, I want to remind the committee of how far we have come.

With the improvements in sexual education and co-location of health services in high schools, the Oregon teen pregnancy rate has been dropping steadily since 2014. We owe it to our students to give them access to the full range of options when they are making decisions.

Our LGBTQ students and educators have been specifically targeted in Oregon's past, and this bill helps ensure that will never happen again. In the late 80s through the early 2000s, a group founded by Lon Mabon ran several ballot measures targeting our LGBTQ community, our schools, and our students. Ballot Measure 9 from the early 1990s sought to prohibit nondiscrimination and declare homosexuality as "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse." In 2000, a second Ballot Measure 9 would have prohibited public schools in Oregon from teaching comprehensive sex education that included LGBTQ issues.



We know that for many students, schools are both the learning environment where they discover how much more complex the world is than they knew and discover support for themselves as they learn about who they are. The 2020 Oregon State of Safe Schools Report revealed that LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to experience bullying and harassment at school. We can change this. For far too many LGBTQ youth, adolescence is a difficult time, and it is the support at school, from community organizations, and affirming family that makes a difference. According to the 2020 national Trevor Project survey of LGBTQ youth, 40% have considered suicide. We can change this.

Our state constitution will be clear that every Oregonian, regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, is afforded the same protections to live a life free from discrimination — from housing and employment to public accommodation to state services. This has a resounding impact on both our students' daily lives and the educators in their workplaces.

On behalf of our students and educators, I urge you to pass SJR 33.

Sincerely,

Reed Scott-Schwalbach
President, Oregon Education Association

Sources:

- High school graduation and social determinants of health <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/high-school-graduation>
- LGBTQ Youth in Oregon <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/BH-Child-Family/SOCAC/Alliance-Systems%20of%20Care%20Presentation.pdf>
- Oregon Youth Authority: LGBTQ Services and Stats in Oregon <https://www.oregon.gov/oya/oiair/Pages/lgbtq.aspx>
- 2020 Oregon Safe Schools Report: https://oregonalliancetopreventsucide.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/OSSCC-Report-2020_FinalDraft.pdf