

February 10th, 2024

### **Testimony in Support for SB 1583 with Suggested Amendment**

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Chloë Hughes and I am writing on behalf of my union in support of SB 1583. AFT-Oregon represents over 18,000 members across the education workforce of Oregon.

Though the Supreme Court has ruled that the First Amendment guarantees the right of all children to read books free of viewpoint discrimination, we are living in an age where our public schools are on the receiving end of agenda-fueled attacks originating from hyper-partisan organizations. The spread of misinformation has led to an unprecedented surge in book bans and efforts to restrict and whitewash curriculum. Nationwide, educators are coming under fire for using materials that allow students to encounter a diversity of ideas and prepare them as future citizens. Some are facing termination due to their defense of intellectual freedom.

As a professor of teacher education who specializes in literacy development and who supervises in-service teachers earning their reading endorsements in K-12 schools, I am very concerned about the impact that these discriminatory practices have on reading development and academics, as well as on teaching tolerance. Research has shown that all students need to see themselves, their lived experiences and their cultural histories reflected in literature and in curriculum in order to maintain academic engagement. Such materials act as ‘mirrors.’ Research also shows that readers need ‘windows’ in order to understand what it’s like for people who don’t share our race, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. Diverse books teach students empathy.

It is the responsibility of public schools to prepare students to succeed in our diverse and complex world. Helping students understand and tolerate different views is a key part of that. I strongly support SB 1583 but would like to suggest a friendly amendment. I believe the original wording “by men and women who” is well intentioned but should be replaced with “by people who” in lines 12-14 of ORS 337.260, to read:

“Textbooks and other instructional materials shall adequately address the roles in and contributions to the economic, political and social development of Oregon and the United States by ~~men and women~~ **people** who:

[(1)] **(a)** Are Native American;

[(2)] **(b)** Are of European, African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, Middle Eastern or Jewish descent;

[(3)] **(c)** Have disabilities;

[(4)] **(d)** Are immigrants or refugees; or

[(5)] **(e)** Are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.”

This would help to include nonbinary individuals or others who would not describe themselves as men or women.

Thank you for your consideration and the work that you are doing to preserve first amendment rights, public education, as well as health and safety in our schools.

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Vice President At Large  
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