

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Em Bookstein
RE: Support for SB1583
Date: February 12, 2024

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber & and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Em Bookstein and I am writing to urge you to **support SB1583**, which will prohibit discrimination based on the race, religion, ability, country of origin, sexuality, or gender of the individuals featured in the content of educational and library materials in public elementary and secondary schools in Oregon.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+ topics or individuals and restrict access for students to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, for example librarians and educators. It also ensures people have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities and selves, and creates more room for understanding over prejudice in Oregon.

I loved books as a kid and read constantly, but to be honest, I can't think of a single book I read in my childhood that had queer characters or stories. It wasn't until I saw a queer relationship on TV in my late 20s that I was able to understand and put words to my queer identity. In that way, I feel personally connected to the issue of how important it is to support our freedom to read stories that represent a full set of experiences. I want queer youth to be able to find stories and characters that resonate with them, so they aren't left to struggle and feel alone. As it is, popular media often erases or ignores stories of people with marginalized identities. With so many book bans now targeting LGBTQIA2S+ stories, queer and straight kids alike will be deprived of those stories.

SB1583 does not change any individual parent's or guardian's right to monitor or oversee what their own children read or view. It does protect the rights of ALL parents and guardians for their children to have access to diverse representation in materials and history taught in the school setting.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story today. We hope you will vote YES to support and advance SB1583.

Thank you,
Em Bookstein, Portland resident - 97211