

To: Senate Committee on Education

February 12, 2024

Re: Support for Senate Bill 1583

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon State Legislature,

I am writing to you today as a staunch advocate for the advancement of education and intellectual freedom within our communities, particularly in the context of our public schools. It is with a sense of urgency and commitment to these principles that I lend my unwavering support to Senate Bill 1583, sponsored by Senator Frederick. This critical piece of legislation aims to prohibit discrimination in the selection of textbooks, instructional materials, program materials, or library books within our public educational institutions.

As an engaged member of the Oregon library community, I have observed firsthand the challenges and threats faced by educators and librarians in their noble efforts to provide a diverse and inclusive learning environment. The distressing accounts of professionals being intimidated, and in some instances, coerced into abandoning their roles due to the educational content they choose, underscore the pressing need for SB 1583. This bill not only safeguards our educators but also ensures that our children receive a well-rounded education that celebrates diversity and fosters a deeper understanding of the myriad perspectives that shape our society.

The significance of SB 1583 cannot be overstated, especially in an era marked by an alarming rise in attempts to censor library and curriculum materials across the United States. These attempts, often targeting LGBTQ+ materials, pose a direct threat to the constitutional right to access information from diverse viewpoints. By supporting SB 1583, we take a decisive stand against such censorship efforts, thereby protecting the intellectual freedom that is the cornerstone of a democratic society.

Furthermore, SB 1583 brings much-needed clarity to help schools and school boards comply with the prohibition on discrimination as required by ORS 659.850. It is imperative that our educational materials reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of our student populations, thereby ensuring that all students see themselves represented in their learning environments. This representation is not merely a matter of inclusion; it is a critical component of fostering empathy, understanding, and a sense of belonging among our youth.

In light of these considerations, I implore you to support SB 1583 when it comes up for a vote. By voting in favor of SB 1583, you will be taking a stand for the rights of educators, librarians, and, most importantly, our students, to have access to a diverse and inclusive range of educational materials.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital issue. Your support for SB 1583 will send a powerful message that Oregon values education, diversity, and the freedom to learn without fear of censorship or discrimination.

Sincerely,

Bob Morrow
Langlois, Oregon