

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

This letter is written in support of SB 1583. Across our country, including in Oregon, forces are at work to interfere with our freedoms. SB 1583 is necessary to prevent the erosion of Oregonians' intellectual rights as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and to shore up the protections from discrimination afforded Oregonians by ORS 659.850.

In its analysis of challenged materials 2022-23, the State Library of Oregon has found that over 70% of challenges to materials in library collections "are about, by, or center the story of people from an underrepresented race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or disability;" groups explicitly protected by ORS 659.850.

Something I learned at an early age, thanks to my mother, was that reading was fundamental to making my way in the world. By reading and questioning, she taught, one learns to discern for oneself what is credible and worthwhile, what is for them and what is not. Just as teaching me to swim was the best hedge against drowning in the rural seaside of my childhood and teaching me street smarts was the best way to protect me from predators in the city where I spent my tween-teen years, reading as widely as possible built my ability to think for myself. Thankfully, I was not shielded from the real world but prepared for it because of school and public libraries and the people who staffed them.

An educated, informed, and discerning populace is fundamental to democracy. I want our legislators to ensure that the intellectual rights of children and adults are protected from the maneuvers of those that attempt to control others and who, if successful, will most assuredly diminish us as a people and as a democracy. As a citizen and a taxpayer, I want school and public libraries to exist and to be fully staffed because they help all children in the way that I was helped by my school and public libraries.

To those that want to diminish our libraries I say to focus instead on encouraging children to read broadly; to discover and enjoy the rich world of thoughts and ideas; and to engage in the world of ideas with them constructively. Help them develop their capacity to decide what is right for them; to understand other perspectives without having to embrace them; and to respect others, regardless of their differences.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth Metz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Ruth Metz

