

February 13, 2024

Dear Senate Committee On Education:

Please accept the following letter in **support of SB1583**. Thank you for proposing a measure that aims to protect from discriminatory censorship based on race, national origin, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical or mental disability, military status, or marital or family status.

I write to you as a person of color living in the State of Oregon. Not only am I a person of color who is a resident of the state, I have worked as an educator and am now working as a public librarian. I write to share the impact of increased book banning of protected class-related materials on the wellness of individuals of marginalized communities. Books that contain topics that are often uncomfortable to read and difficult to imagine are at the root of these challenges. In censoring these stories, one is suppressing young people's chances to be affirmed in their own uncomfortable and difficult life experiences. These actions disregard a young people's ability to see themselves reflected in the stories they read. It denies the chance for young people to build empathy for experiences outside of their own.

By restricting information and discouraging freedom of thought, censors undermine one of the primary functions of education: teaching students how to think for themselves. Such actions, assert free speech proponents, endanger tolerance, free expression, and democracy. Not only do these sorts of book bans restrict freedom of thought and information, it poses a real threat to the safety, well-being, and belongingness of marginalized voices.

I am in **full support of SB1583** as a measure to protect against further discrimination to marginalized communities.

Finally, I write to share the following benefits found in demonstrating continued support for SB1583:

- Thwarts efforts by individuals, or groups of individuals, whose main goal is to eradicate diverse voices
- Effectively prevents material biases and censorship based on defined protected classes

- Provides school boards, administrators, and librarians with clear directive to prohibit discriminatory practices in selection and in reconsideration of curricular and library materials
- Grants a pathway for Oregon students to be able to have a non-limited education, with access to vast resources, which in turn will allow them to be best prepared for future collegiate and professional careers
- Allows Oregon students to find representation via the protected classes of which they may be members
- Does not remove any individual parental or guardianship rights in education
- Safeguards institutions against targeted threats and campaigns

Thank you for your time and for representing the voices of marginalized communities that are seeking to make Oregon a welcoming home for themselves.