

Submitter: Kit Lorelied
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1583

Good afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony on Senate Bill 1583.

My name is Kit Lorelied and I want to extend my support for the bill. I do this on two fronts: as a librarian and as a trans nonbinary individual with an entire household that identifies as LGBTQIA+.

As a librarian I deeply agree with the American Library Association's Bill of Rights which includes "Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Lately there has been a concerted effort by groups across the United States to censor books in the guise of protecting children. The books that they want to remove primarily deal with issues of race and the queer community. They hope to erase the experiences of millions of people in a vain attempt to hold onto some vague concept of "traditional values." SB 1583 would help curtail these types of efforts and would result in a richer dialogue around national topics and people's held beliefs. It would allow classrooms to have frank discussions so that we can form more empathetic impressions of people who differ in opinion from us.

Keeping items in libraries and classrooms that might appear controversial also allows the children who are not represented by mainstream media to feel seen and create a sense of belonging. This is particularly true in the LGBTQIA+ community where suicide rates are depressingly high. Taking away these materials in these contexts does not allow for discussions of factual information surrounding the mental and physical health of the most vulnerable populations. Instead, kids will simply turn to friends and online sources where they may not be able to tell the difference between fact and fiction. It leaves them to follow the vagaries of TikTok influencers and well-meaning friends with no guidance in how to discern what is a legitimate source of information.

On a very personal note, I am also concerned for my trans child. He already has enough issues with bullying. How can he hope to survive school if he can not even find materials that tell him that it will all be okay? I know I barely survived in the middle of Oklahoma without the wonderful assortment of books that are available today. And I want better for him. What parent doesn't? Let parents be parents and decide what is right for their own children. Don't allow outside groups come in and make that decision for me.

All of this is to day that I whole heartedly support anything that will keep books in the hands of those who need them most. Please vote yes on SB 1583.