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On Behalf Of: Myself
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1583 SB 1583

My statement is my own and does not represent the opinion of others.

As a school board member and an employee of a public library system I am no stranger to challenges to books and materials. Challenges have increased at an alarming rate as documented by the American Library Association, up from 2,500 in 2021-2022 to 3,400 in 2022-2023. In 2023 the Washington Post analyzed 1,000 book challenges and found that the majority of those challenges were made by just 11 people. The books most frequently challenged were books by and about LGBTQIA+ people followed closely by books by and about people of color and racism. There is a clear agenda in what books are being targeted.

As lawmakers it your duty to support and protect the rights of all Oregonians. SB 1583 works to ensure representation on our library shelves and in our school materials by preventing bias and censorship. It gives school boards, librarians and administrators direction and the tools necessary to stand against discriminatory practices.

This bill does not prevent parents or guardians from exercising their rights to make decisions about their child's education. However it does prohibit their choices from impacting options for others.

Students deserve a full understanding of our history and our diverse culture. Understanding that there are people in the world who are different from them is not indoctrination, it is preparing them for a future in a wide, wonderful world. Allowing books and materials to be challenged and removed from library shelves and from instruction materials based on their representation of a protected class of people is erasing the lived experiences of our fellow citizens.

It is now more important than ever to stand up for intellectual freedom, access to information and protecting the voices, stories and lived experiences of all.