

Submitter: SUSAN STONE
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1583

My name is Susan Stone. I am writing in strong support of SB 1583, which addresses the important issue of preventing discrimination when selecting textbooks, instructional materials, program materials, or library books in public schools. During my 20-plus years as a teacher librarian for Portland Public Schools, I believe this bill is crucial in promoting inclusivity and respect for others in our schools, and will prevent censorship attempts that stem from discriminatory beliefs.

This bill does not allow a board or a person to choose or not choose materials that are used in a school when the choice is discrimination, but creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information to both users of that information (ex: students and library users), as well as creators and providers of that information (ex: librarians, educators and authors). It also stands in the face of further discrimination towards marginalized groups, whoever they might be, by allowing people the ability to seek information about their histories and themselves.

Students deserve to learn about their own ancestors, and about the ancestors of others in their communities. Students deserve to learn both the inspiring and the horrifying aspects of the history of Oregon and the United States. Protecting the rights of Oregon students to learn accurate history will help ensure a better future for Oregon

I know first-hand, from working with 1000s of students as a school librarian, how important it is to provide students with carefully selected books, publications, and online materials that represent a variety of views, perspectives, and experiences so they can practice and refine the critical thinking skills we want them to exercise as Oregon citizens. Strong critical thinking skills are one of the most valuable skills students should gain from their K-12 experience – as they will need these when they encounter information out in their personal worlds and environments. If school textbook and school library materials are censored based on discriminatory determinations, opportunities for critical thinking and discussion will be stunted.

I also believe this bill is true to the stated values of our Oregon Department of Education: Integrity, Accountability, Excellence, and Equity. For our students to become the critical-thinking citizens that Oregon needs, it is crucial they have access to materials that adequately addresses the roles in and contributions to the economic, political and social development of Oregon and the United States by people who are Native American; of European, African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, Middle Eastern or Jewish descent; have disabilities; are immigrants

or refugees; or are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

I urge you to support SB 1583 when it comes up for a vote in committee or on the floor. It is a vote that protects the intellectual freedom rights of our students.

Thank you.

Susan Stone
Past Oregon Association of School Libraries Chair
Retired Teacher/School Librarian