

February 13, 2024

Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill SB 1583

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Our coalition strongly supports Senate Bill 1583, which will prohibit discrimination when making decisions about textbooks, instructional materials, program materials and library books used in the Oregon public schools.

Book bans have been used across the nation to suppress freedom of speech and target books and content from historically marginalized communities. In 2022, 2,571 titles were targeted, with a majority being written by or about LGBTQIA+ people, Black people, Indigenous people and people of color. SB 1583 will protect all Oregonians' right to free speech by prohibiting book bans based on race, gender identity, country of origin, sexual orientation, disability and immigrant status.

According to the U.S. Supreme Court, freedom of speech includes not just the right to speak but also the right to learn. All students have a First Amendment right to read and learn about the history and viewpoints of all communities — including their own identity — inside and outside of the classroom. All youth deserve the opportunity to see themselves, their families and members of their community represented in the classroom. Senate Bill 1583 will protect free speech and democracy by prohibiting discriminatory book bans and ensuring that all Oregon students have access to inclusive educational materials.

Our communities and democracy are strengthened when all people, especially young people, have access to stories and materials that reflect their lives and experiences. We urge you to vote in support of Senate Bill 1583 and pass it out of committee.

Respectfully,
ACLU of Oregon
Basic Rights Oregon
Latino Network
Next Up Action Fund
Oregon Association of Student Councils
Our Children Oregon
Parents Defending Schools and Libraries
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon
Urban League of Portland



PARENTS DEFENDING
SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES



Urban League
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