



The Oregon Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) strongly urges the passage of SB1583.

Our country is experiencing an [explosion of attempts to censor library and curriculum materials](#) in our public schools, and [Oregon is no exception to this unfortunate trend](#). Many of these attempts are blatant in their opposition to LGBTQ+ materials. Many more couch their discriminatory intent in seemingly innocuous catchphrases such as “parental rights” or “sexually explicit materials.” Whatever language is used, these coordinated censorship attempts clearly intend to limit the library and curricular materials available to Oregon students based solely on the constitutionally protected viewpoints of those materials. SB1583 brings needed clarity to help schools and school boards comply with the prohibition on discrimination required by ORS 659.850.

There are occasionally reasons to remove books from a library or classroom collection such as outdated information, or worn or damaged materials. However, removal for reasons that discriminate against protected classes of persons is unconstitutional. Educating students for our globally connected 21st century world requires that they have the opportunity to freely explore ideas and viewpoints. Restricting their access to information resources impedes this important aspect of their education. Our founding fathers understood the necessity of this freedom to explore ideas when they enshrined the freedom of expression in the very first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The courts have consistently upheld the corollary right to freely read, view, and receive information, including for minor children in the school setting. SB1583 provides guardrails to help schools and school boards avoid such unconstitutional discrimination in library and curricular resources.

Opponents of SB1583 would have you believe it takes local control away from local school boards. In fact, it protects schools and school boards from making unconstitutional decisions that will erode public trust and potentially result in costly lawsuits or other legal action. Schools and school boards across Oregon are spending inordinate amounts of time and resources responding to challenges to library or curricular materials – time and resources that could be better spent on more pressing educational matters. SB1583 does not preclude parents, guardians, or others from requesting reconsideration of library or curricular materials for valid reasons. It does, however, prevent a vocal minority from hijacking the time and energy of school and district staff.

Opponents of SB1583 would have you believe they somehow represent a groundswell of support for restricting materials in school libraries and classrooms. The truth is that national surveys reveal that [most voters do not approve of book bans](#), and “...will consider book banning when voting for legislators.” A study of the 2020-2021 school year, in fact, found that just [11 people were responsible for the majority of the hundreds of book challenges in public schools](#) that year. Challengers commonly admit to not having read all of a book they are requesting to have removed. Many of the challenges we have seen in Oregon schools are simply printouts of lists provided by nationally organized extremist groups, sometimes of books not even present in the school’s library or classrooms. SB1583 will provide needed safeguards against these sorts of attempts by vocal minorities to control what kids have access to in our schools.

Opponents of SB1593 would have you believe that a library collection purged of diverse literature that may include mature language, themes, and scenes is a benefit to student development. But a study in the journal *Reading Research Quarterly* (2014) found that students who read diverse literature were more likely to demonstrate increased empathy and perspective-taking abilities compared to a control group. In addition, the American Library Association’s report, “Why Diversity Matters,” highlights the positive impact of varied literature on youth’s cognitive and affective development and how it fosters empathy, understanding, and critical thinking. SB1593 helps protect students’ right to choose diverse literature, which increases their opportunity to cultivate the invaluable character traits and soft skills that are essential for [leadership roles](#) and success in one’s career and personal life.

Opponents of SB1583 would have you believe it takes away parents’ rights to control what their kids have access to. In truth, SB1583 prevents a vocal minority, school administrator, or school board from making unconstitutional decisions to restrict what the children of other parents and guardians can access. Parents and guardians should be involved in their child(ren)’s education. They have every right to request alternative reading or viewing assignments. They have every right to explain to their child(ren) what books or kinds of books they should not be reading. SB1583 simply reminds schools and school boards that those parents and guardians do not have the right to restrict what the children of other parents or guardians can read or view. To do so is viewpoint discrimination. SB1583 helps schools and school boards ensure the appropriate rights of ALL parents and guardians are safeguarded from discrimination.

Discrimination based on protected classes of persons is already illegal. SB1583 clarifies what that means in terms of the selection or de-selection of library and curricular materials in Oregon public schools. SB1583 will help our many volunteer school board members and the school administrators they hire to make constitutionally appropriate decisions regarding library and curricular materials. SB1583 will protect the valuable time and resources of these school boards and administrators from needless, discriminatory material challenges. SB1583 will help ensure the constitutional rights of all parents and guardians of children in Oregon public schools are protected from discrimination.

The Oregon Library Association’s Intellectual Freedom Committee strongly urges your support of SB1583. We thank you for your time and consideration.