

TO: House Committee on Rules

FROM: Grecia Rojas, ACLU of Oregon

RE: Support for SB1583A

Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Kropf & Vice Chair Helfrich, and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Grecia Rojas, I am the Development Associate at the ACLU of Oregon. The ACLU of Oregon's main organizational testimony is set out in the written testimony submitted by Mariana Garcia Medina, Senior Policy Associate, and Sandy Chung, Executive Director. Today, I am submitting this testimony because book bans matter to me personally, and I am urging your support of SB1583A.

As a child, I was born into a home that lived below the poverty line and it was through reading and having access to books through my schools and public libraries that I was able to imagine a better life for myself and give myself the knowledge that I needed to break the cycle of poverty my family suffered from. My father began teaching me to read when I was three years old through books we were able to access from our public and school libraries, because he knew that the most powerful skill I could gain in life was the ability to read and read critically. Some of my first books were about science and cultures from around the world and books about the lives of important historical figures like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth. These subjects and names currently face book bans in other states around the country. I must ask, how is it that books that I was able to access twenty years ago are now considered dangerous and must be censored for children today? I am a better and wiser person today because I was able to access and read books about the very subjects that extremists groups are trying to censor and attack. The rights and privileges that were given to me as a child should not be stolen from kids today.

Students do not and should not lose their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gates and book bans and censorship have no place in Oregon schools. Please support the freedom to read and learn by advancing SB1583A.

Thank you,

Grecia Rojas