

Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and members of the committee.

My name is Heather Roberts from Tualatin. I am both a parent and the Building Library Media Coordinator at Edward Byrom and Durham Elementary Schools in the Tigard-Tualatin School District, and I am writing to urge you to support [Senate Bill 1098](#), which will prohibit discrimination based on the race, religion, ability, country of origin, sexuality, or gender of the individuals featured in the content of educational and library materials in K-12 public schools in Oregon.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+, Black people, Indigenous people and other people of color, topics or individuals and restrict access for students to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, for example librarians and educators. It also ensures students have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities and selves.

As a former high school Language Arts teacher, an elementary school library coordinator, a mother to two amazing kids, and a life-long reader, I know the power of books. It is imperative that our students see themselves and their experiences reflected in the books that they read and that are available to them in public spaces. Books that provide characters that our students can identify with, life experiences that mirror their own, challenges that can teach resilience and perseverance, and voices that lift up our marginalized communities can literally save our students, and our childrens,' lives. Additionally, the best way for all students to build a foundation of empathy and kindness is to experience stories from, and about, people, places, and situations that are different from their own.

In addition to providing necessary frameworks for students to identify with, the freedom to read is a fundamental right in the U.S. Constitution and is a bedrock to Democracy. By creating safeguards around government censorship of books, magazines and newspapers, as well as art, film, music and materials on the internet, the right to free speech protects us from government attempts to suppress ideas and information. Courts have said that the First Amendment protects not just the right to speak but the right to receive information. In other words, all of us, including young people, have a right to access a diverse range of stories and perspectives.

It is imperative that we do everything we can to protect all Oregon students' rights.

[Senate Bill 1098](#) protects student's right to see themselves represented in the books, materials and classrooms they learn from and to learn about diverse communities and people.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story today. We urge you to vote YES to support and advance [Senate Bill 1098](#).

Thank you,

Heather Roberts