

Submitter: Austin Cole

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1583

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Austin Cole, and I work with 4D Recovery, a non-profit organization serving Oregonians in recovery from substance use challenges and related trauma.

I am writing in opposition to Senate Bill 1583 because I believe it would unintentionally harm young people — especially those who are at risk, those in recovery, and those seeking accurate information about identity, health, and well-being — by limiting the ability of local educators, recovery professionals, and parents to collaborate on age-appropriate educational and support resources.

Why We Oppose SB 1583

1. Recovery Support Depends on Access to Inclusive, Evidence-Based Information

In our work, we see every day how critical it is for young people to have access to accurate, inclusive materials that help them understand themselves, their health, and where to find help. For adolescents struggling with addiction, mental health issues, gender identity questions, or trauma — being able to see themselves reflected in books and resources can reduce isolation and connect them to support. Restricting materials based on vague statewide criteria risks erasing voices that help people heal.

2. Local Professionals Are Best Positioned to Assess Appropriateness Educators, school counselors, librarians, and community recovery organizations in our region work together to ensure materials are developmentally appropriate and supportive of student health. SB 1583 could prevent local districts from removing or restricting access to specific materials when professionals determine they are unsuitable for a given age group, even if the concern is about maturity level rather than discrimination. Local decision-making matters for the safety and well-being of youth.

3. Protecting Young People Means Nuanced Judgment — Not One-Size-Fits-All Rules

Our clients include teens who have experienced homelessness, substance use, and trauma. They need nuanced, trauma-informed education and support — not blanket rules that hamper educators' ability to adapt materials and referrals. Decisions about library content and in-school resources must reflect clinical judgment, community needs, and parent engagement, not a single standard imposed from afar.

4. Risk of Unintended Consequences on Health Literacy and Recovery Outcomes

Restricting local authority may discourage the availability of books or curricula that cover topics such as mental health, addiction recovery, LGBTQ+ experiences, and resilience — subjects that are often stigmatized yet vital to preventing harm and saving lives. Limiting access to these resources may exacerbate stigma and isolation, making it harder for young people to seek help and connect with support networks like ours.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose SB 1583 in its current form or to amend it to preserve local control, embed clear standards distinguishing harmful content from supportive, evidence-based materials, and ensure that schools and community partners can continue to meet the diverse needs of all students, including those in recovery.

Thank you for your time and consideration.