



Date: March 29, 2021
To: Senate Education Committee, Chair Dembrow and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations
RE: SB 552 [Information Literacy]

On behalf of OEA's 41,000 members, it is my honor to submit testimony in support of SB 552, which would take an important step forward on the provision of media and information literacy education in our public schools.

Our members, including teacher librarians, have – along with the rest of us – watched as public discourse, access to credible information, and analysis of data sources has eroded over the years. So too has the librarian workforce in Oregon's public schools, leaving our students with less guidance in media literacy. What has occurred in the public sphere in recent years, including the January 6 insurrection, can at least in part be traced to the decline of critical thinking, objective reporting, and information literacy lapses. Our school librarians want to remedy this critical problem. They want to ensure that the next generation of Oregon students emerge with the tools they need to make sense of their worlds.

Media literacy clearly is, because of the impact of social media on critical thinking, an essential skill. Our members are dedicated to the proposition that they are there to teach our students how to think, not what to think. In this context, evaluating resources for veracity and credibility is crucial.

SB 552 aims to establish an advisory group to examine the ODE's existing media program standards. The hope is that our librarians would serve on this group, to lend their expertise to the evolution of this guidance. Furthermore, they would like to ensure that those courses districts are encouraged to offer, alongside civics and financial literacy, includes information literacy. This would enable ODE to develop academic content standards for public school information literacy programs, including digital literacy.

OEA would like to see this concept advance this session, and we are hopeful that you will agree that this addresses an urgent need. Thank you for your consideration.

