

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Dear Senator Dick Anderson and Senator Sara Gelser Blouin, and all members of the Senate Committee On Education:

I am writing today in support of SB 1075, set for a hearing on 03/30/2023. I am a long time Oregon librarian, and I've had a unique career that has spanned both school and public library settings. I've also had the pleasure of working alongside State Library staff as a member and Chair of the LSTA Advisory Council. Currently I serve as the District Media Specialist and Librarian for the Philomath School District. I reside in Albany, and utilize both the Albany Public Library and the Corvallis-Benton Co. Public Library.

Forging a firm link between the Department of Education and the Oregon State Library has long been a priority and hope. Currently the two organizations work alongside each other, but not always together. By putting a school media specialist/librarian inside the Department of Education and setting a course for standard development, there is a unique and exciting opportunity to establish strong school media program standards to benefit our entire state.

Being a future thinking librarian, I can tell you that my work has changed dramatically over the past decade. While books and literacy are still in the forefront of my job, I also manage a Chromebook lending program serving grades 8-12, serve on our Computer Science/STEM For All work team, organize unique programming on our campus to engage students, solve technology problems in classrooms, and support the development of digital literacy and digital citizenship curriculum efforts K-12. I also assist with social-emotional learning, grant writing, and other duties as assigned to support our students and staff. It is a fun, exciting, and demanding time to be a librarian! We need strong standards that point the direction toward the future, and this step can help us get there.

I'd also like to point out that Oregon needs more school librarians, and by making this investment at the highest level, it could spark smaller changes statewide. Currently there are only about 147 certified school librarians in our state, but the workload of our positions just keeps getting bigger, more nuanced, and firmly linked to areas such as technology, STEM, computer science, and more! Let's set students up for a bright and interesting future with forward thinking and adequately supported school library programs.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and work during this legislative session. I urge you to pass SB 1075 and strengthen Oregon school libraries from directly within the Department of Education!

Sincerely,

Ashley Folgate, M.L.I.S.
District Media Specialist
Philomath School District
(541) 929-3167
ashley.folgate@philomath.k12.or.us