

Ivy Hallmark
Regarding Senate Bill 1583
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My name is Ivy Hallmark and I'm a Teen Programming Librarian at a public library. I am testifying on the importance of access to accurate and diverse historical information for the youth of my community.

I grew up in Oregon, and received my elementary and secondary education in a rural community from teachers that, I believe, tried to present and teach the best information they could. While I don't feel my education actively or explicitly excluded any groups from the historical narrative, the information I was taught had a distinct ethnocentric lens. This left me woefully unprepared to appreciate and communicate in the world at large, due to inaccurate beliefs and assumptions about people different from me – particularly for members of the LGBT community and people with disabilities.

As an adult meeting people whose lives contradict my assumptions, I have wished that I had been taught a more nuanced way of interpreting the world around me. Gaining a broader perspective of different people's lived experiences, as well as a better understanding of the valuable contributions different individuals can make, has been an ongoing process that I anticipate will encompass the rest of my life.

Many of the youth I interact with on a regular basis are on a similar trajectory. They're attending school in my hometown, and have many of the same teachers I did. Ensuring both students and teachers have access to a wide range of instructional materials that adequately represent the lived experiences, good and bad, within our country is essential to civic education. Everyone interacts with people who are different from themselves, whether through race, religion, gender, sexuality, abilities, or backgrounds. Empathy and understanding are skills that most people spend their whole lives developing, but developing those skills at a younger age will make it far easier for the youth in our communities to succeed.

There are millions of little things parents, teachers, and community members can do to help and influence the youth. However, one simple large thing that can be done is ensure no group is intentionally left out or misrepresented in our narratives. Guaranteeing that the instructional materials available to students and educators show the range of roles and contributions that have been essential in shaping our country will help children, teenagers, and adults learn to connect with people who are different, as well as find themselves reflected in our discourse, and will help shape the way we all interact in our future.

I appreciate the time and consideration the Senate Committee on Education will be spending on this hearing. Thank you for reading my testimony and pondering the impact this bill will have in our communities.