Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
February 9, 2024

RE: Support of SB 1583

To the Esteemed Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 1583, which will prevent discrimination when selecting textbooks, instructional materials, program materials or library books in public schools. Please vote to support this bill when it comes up for a vote.

The United States, and Oregon, is experiencing an explosion of attempts to censor library and curriculum materials in our public schools and public libraries. The vast majority of the titles being challenged are written by marginalized people: Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx, LGBTQ+, differently abled, and those whose identities overlap these categories. I believe SB 1583 will help prevent book bans and protect students' access to these critically important points of view.

I earned my Master of Library Science degree in 2002, and have spent most of my professional career working with children and their caregivers. For six years, I purchased all materials for ages birth to eighteen for the Astoria Public Library. For three years, while waiting for a library position to open up in Astoria, I worked in local schools as an aide. I have seen firsthand how important it is for children to see themselves reflected in the books and materials available to them.

I have also seen the importance of reading about other people's experiences. We cannot build a society of people who understand and empathize with others if we do not allow our children to grow up reading and learning about people whose life experiences are different from their own.

Please ensure that important educational texts and materials are available to all students, and that school boards and administrators receive the clarity they need to comply with ORS 659.850, which prohibits discrimination. Please pass SB 1583 with the proposed amendment from the Oregon Library Association.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Myers Harold, MLS
Library Director