

Submitter: Constance Palaia
On Behalf Of: Oregon Youth and Families
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1583

TO: Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Constance Palaia – Three Rivers School District Librarian

RE: Support for SB1583

February 12, 2024

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber & and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Constance Palaia. I've been an elementary school librarian for 17 years and am in full support of SB1583. This bill is timely and necessary to the well-being and education of the youth with whom I work. The prohibition of discrimination based on the race, religion, ability, country of origin, sexuality, or gender of the individuals featured in the content of educational and library materials in public elementary and secondary schools in Oregon is important right now.

It is no secret that there are those in Oregon hell-bent on erasing or whitewashing history. There is a concerted effort to pretend that we live in a post-racial time and that if we sterilize the history and lived experience of historically marginalized people all the bad parts just disappear. My students are curious about themselves, each other, and how they fit in society. They need to know that they are not alone. They are not going to accept stories that leave out Black, Indigenous, People of Color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQSIA folks. We say that we want to nurture critical thinkers. To think critically you need honest information. To change the future, we need to reckon with the past. Learning about the systems and struggles everyone confronts helps social emotional wellness, empathy, and community.

I have no hidden agenda. The books in my collection are age-appropriate, compelling, educational, and aligned with Oregon State Standards. I honor the right of a parent or guardian to oversee what their child checks out of the library. I honor the right of all families to have access to diverse materials that represent them. I have had parents question materials and have never had an outright ban. Sometimes it's an opportunity for an important conversation. I look forward to those conversations and to the joy that I see in a youth's face when they find a book that excites them with the thrill of learning and knowing that someone else has a shared experience.

Thank you for hearing my story. I am only one of thousands of dedicated, passionate educators grateful for this bill. I hope that you will help us help our Oregon children by supporting SB1583.

Thank you,

Constance Palaia