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State Senator Kayse Jama

Senate District 24 (D-East Portland, Damascus, Boring)

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

I write to you today in support of SB 1583, which would prohibit discrimination in the selection of instructional materials and library books in Oregon’s public schools. I believe this bill is necessary to preserve the integrity of our historical education and ensure that our schools are welcoming, safe places for all students.

Public schools across the country have seen an alarming rise in censorship attempts over the past several years. According to the American Library Association, there were attempts to remove over 3,900 books from school libraries between January and September of 2023. The vast majority of these challenges attempted to remove books written by or about a person of color or someone from the LGBTQIA+ community.¹

Book bans and other censorship efforts are a direct attack on the values of a pluralistic, just society. Removing the historical contributions of marginalized groups from school lesson plans and libraries is an attempt to simplify and sanitize our country’s complex, inherently multicultural history. It is also an attempt to silence diverse voices and erase their past—and present—contributions to public life.

For queer students, students of color, and other students from historically marginalized groups, it can be extremely powerful to see their identities and lived experiences reflected in the classroom. Many of these students struggle daily with isolation and othering by their peers. When our educational materials accurately represent our country’s diverse past and future, we show students that, despite structural and societal injustices, people from marginalized groups have persevered, resisted, and flourished. We give them the inspiration and the tools to do the same.

The state of Oregon has an obligation to ensure that our schools are places where students can freely engage with a diverse set of ideas and have respectful, meaningful conversations with their teachers and peers. I strongly urge you to vote yes on SB 1583.

¹ [Book Ban Data | Advocacy, Legislation & Issues \(ala.org\)](#)