

TO: Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Rowan Everard, Basic Rights Oregon board co-chair

RE: Support for SB1583

Date: 2/12/2024

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

My name is Rowan and I am writing to urge you to support SB1583, which will prohibit 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.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+ topics or individuals and restrict access for students to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. Censorship is contrary to Oregon values. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, for example librarians and educators. It also ensures people have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities and selves, and creates more room for understanding over prejudice in Oregon.

As a healthcare provider, I work with queer and trans youth who have come to Portland from all over Oregon. They consistently mention books, movies and tv shows that showed them it was possible to live as a queer/trans person and that gave them hope for the future. Without access to media representations, it can be hard to imagine a future for oneself. We know that queer and trans youth are at heightened risk for suicide, especially if their communities are not accepting, and protecting the right to engage with diverse media can be life-saving.

SB1583 does not change any individual parent's or guardian's right to monitor or oversee what their own children read or view. It does protect the rights of ALL parents and guardians for their children to have access to diverse representation in materials and history taught in the school setting.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story today. We hope you will vote YES to support and advance SB1583.

Thank you, Rowan Everard