

February 12, 2024

Chairman Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 1583, which will prevent discrimination in the selection of textbooks, instructional materials, and library books in public schools. As a member and former chair of the State Library Board and a member of the Deschutes Public Library District board, I urge YOUR SUPPORT for this crucial legislation.

I am a lifelong Oregonian and have lived in Central Oregon for more than 40 years. I am not a librarian or teacher, but believe in the crucial role libraries and free access to information play in our schools and democracy.

I wish that this legislation was not necessary, but given the current state of politics in our nation and our state, this measure is critical in protecting the rights of Oregon students to access the full range of information needed for them to learn effectively, live productive lives, and become informed citizens. Free access to information is a cornerstone of our democracy and is vital in schools, where students are learning to research, evaluate the quality and trustworthiness of information, and debate important issues. Restricting access to materials by removing them from libraries and classrooms before research can even begin is antithetical to learning.

In the last few years, the US has experienced unprecedented numbers of attempts to censor library and instructional materials at public schools and Oregon has been no exception. These attempts are not the “grassroots” efforts of concerned parents, as they purport to be, but are part of nationally funded political agenda by organized groups. These efforts are focused on promoting particular political agendas, rewriting or sanitizing history, stifling discussion of LGBTQ+ topics, and generally limiting discussion to only the topics these groups deem acceptable. As a believer in a free society, I find this trend chilling.

Please take a stand and support SB 1583. We, as a state, need to be clear that censorship and book bans have no place in Oregon schools. We must support the teachers and librarians who have dedicated their lives to helping our young people learn and ensure that robust learning and debate continue to be a part of our children’s education. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Malkin
Bend, Oregon

Cc: Sen. Tim Knopp
Rep. Emerson Levy