

Submitter: Nancy Hightower  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB1583

FROM: Your Name, Affiliation if Applicable

RE: Support for SB1583

Date: 2/12/24

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

My name is Nancy Hightower 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. 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 student, I always felt different, not fitting in to the gender roles or heteronormative societal expectations of my time. I was lucky and had parents who encouraged me to read widely, both at school and at home. Finding stories and characters I could relate to was vital to my sense of self.

As a lifelong educator, I feel students need that representation in the books they read, in all aspects of self. Knowing they aren't alone, aren't so different, is so important to their mental health and self-esteem.

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, Nancy Hightower