

Submitter: A C
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1583

I oppose this bill because it is poorly written and, I believe, will lead to unintended consequences. I do not support book "bans" in general. But I do believe that our public schools should not be filled with materials that can be harmful to children's still developing brains. Those developing brains should be exposed to different lifestyles and ideas. There are many books out there that cover these topics in ways that are developmentally appropriate. But not all.

Unfortunately, the term book "ban" is being used for political purposes to make it seem like libraries across the country are being subjected to Fahrenheit 451 style book burnings. This is not the case. For one, most of these "bans" are not happening in public libraries, but in school libraries. The books that children and families supposedly are banned are freely available and, often, being promoted in story times and in book displays at public libraries across the country.

The difference there is that parents then have the freedom to choose what they want their children exposed to in a public library. This is not the case in school libraries. And, as all of you know, Oregon does not support school choice for those that cannot afford it. Thus, most parents have no choice but to send their children to public schools (and public school libraries as a result).

In addition, school boards are elected officials throughout the state of Oregon already. School boards, along with the coordination and cooperation of school librarians and administration, should be able to make their own decisions regarding what materials are acceptable and developmentally appropriate in each school.

Let's not forget that school librarians have been discerning what should and shouldn't go in their collections for quite some time. Choosing to not include a certain book in a collection is not necessarily a book "ban". But simply a choice in what is best for students. Those decisions are not necessarily because of discrimination. And if there is a librarian, school board members, or even school administrators that are discriminating against a protected group, the citizens in their community can vote them out of office. As elected officials they are subject to the public for their decisions, right or wrong. See the recent Newberg School Board Elections for example.

My fear is that this bill will lead to school librarians, school boards, and administrators having less freedom to choose the best books for our school libraries if those books don't contain the right propaganda certain segments of our society want to push to

young children. I ask you to consider what the consequences would be for a school librarian choosing to not include a textbook in their library that wasn't scientifically accurate? One would think that librarian would be doing their job. But, under this law, might they be labeled by some as "discriminating" against the transgender community? Will certain books be required in school libraries because of this law?

In conclusion, this bill takes local control out of the hands of locally elected officials. It won't help foster understanding and compassion for marginalized communities. If anything, it will only create a more divisive state. When people are forced to think a certain way or else, they usually aren't more open to learning more about why they might think that way. They just feel resentment and opposition to whatever ideas they are being forced to comply with.

The whole point of a public library is to create a collection of materials that the public can explore and agree or disagree with on their own terms. Not because of state sanctioned thought police. Let's keep it that way.

School libraries are a different animal. Children and their parents are given no choice in what ideas and materials they must learn and be exposed to. As a result, school libraries must be curated in a more limited way. Not all books should be in school libraries. I urge you to vote no.