

Hello,

My name is Bridget Esqueda. I am writing this letter in support of SB1583. Growing up as a distracted, young child who often struggled to read, it was difficult for me to find stories that interested and engaged me. Reading was a chore and I did not do well in school because of it. It was not until my 3rd grade teacher started to read “Charlotte’s Web” to us in class, where I found myself captivated by the story of the little lonely pig and his desire to make a friend. This story was the beginning of my love for books. As I discovered more stories with characters who were dealing with similar issues as I was, I found my refuge. In books I was able to go on so many adventures to far away places and learn about the experiences of others through their lens. Due to these diverse viewpoints, it taught me how to be empathetic and open different cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs of others.

It has been disheartening to learn that in the last year, Oregon saw [the most challenges to books](#) than ever before in its history. This is a trend that is continuing to grow. If we do not do anything now to prevent books from being taken away, when will the censorship stop? I understand that those who wish to ban books may be wanting to do so out of genuine concern of the content and fear of negative influence. But books challenge us to see windows to different worlds, ideas, and experiences. It can educate and inspire us. By restricting the content of books, we risk narrowing our collective understanding and empathy which are crucial for a compassionate and inclusive society.

Banning books closes off paths to understanding, dialogue, and limits our freedom to think independently. Instead of banning books, lets encourage critical thinking and discussion. This is the most effective way to address controversial topics and protect shared values. We should work together to create environments where discussions can occur in constructive and meaningful ways, empowering individuals to differentiate, learn, and grow.

Respectfully,

Bridget Esqueda