



Senate Committee on Education
RE: Support for SB 1583

February 13, 2024

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

My name is Devin Ruiz and I'm the Movement Building Director at Next Up Action Fund. Our organization has been around since 2002, and our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. We're an organization led by and working with predominantly Black, Indigenous, and youth of color, disabled, low-income, and LGBTQ+ youth. What we want most is a world that values and invests in them, and to do so we need to make sure that their lived experiences are reflected in the books they have access to. I am writing to urge you to support SB 1583, 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 queer woman of color and facilitator of our youth programs across Oregon, I know firsthand the importance of our young people being able to see themselves and their communities reflected in the books they read. In order to create tangible changes in their communities it's necessary to understand the history and current conditions and stories of people whose identities exist on the axis of marginalization. Reading books rich in culture is an opportunity for our young people to imagine new realities which is critical to the civic engagement process. **We create a better world when we allow our young people to learn freely and when we stand strong against discrimination.**

SB 1583 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 SB 1583.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Devin Ruiz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

devin ruiz

Movement Building Director
Next Up Action Fund