

Dear Committee,

For the record, I am Kasey Fernandez, Library Media Specialist and parent, speaking in strong support Senate Bill 1583.

Library staff, admin and educators in my district strive to offer materials that reflect the rich diversity of our world. While the majority of our students and families demand diverse, inclusive materials, including age appropriate PK-12 LGBTQ+ materials, we still face attempts at book censorship.

Often, those seeking to ban books act without having read the materials in question, basing complaints on isolated passages or misunderstandings. They often do not understand how healing and restorative positive, age appropriate representation can be for students who belong to underrepresented communities that face disparity disproportionately. Unwarranted book concerns waste time and energy, and cause unnecessary alarm.

Efforts to ban inclusive materials harm students in multiple ways:

- Hindering students access to diverse materials restricts their capacity to understand themselves and others, and diminishes their ability to spot personal and global injustice and advocate for change.
- Attempts to sanitize the curriculum harm everyone, denying the rich understanding that comes from learning about history and current topics from multiple perspectives.
- When students don't see themselves reflected in materials, it isolates them and sends a signal that they aren't included. This can exacerbate segregation, disconnection, and disengagement which can widen societal divides and dissolve student safety and wellbeing.

SB 1583 ensures that school staff will be supported when they provide access to diverse perspectives, a right protected by the American Library Association's Bill of Rights. School Boards should not be given the power to make decisions that violate these Federal rights.

I urge you to support our students and staff and pass SB 1583.

Thank you for your time and consideration.