

From: Gregory Sotir

To: Senate Committee on Education

Regarding the Measure: SB1583

I am in favor of this Bill, SB1583, and ask that you vote in favor of passage.

Having a wide plethora of textual materials and creative works allows the formation of an informed mind capable of facing challenges with creativity and comity. As an important component, even a critical one, to civilization, to cultural formation, and to democratic continuity that ability to choose is not only a fundamental component of our democracy, but a sacred endeavor as well.

When voices within our culture find safety and comfort within words written down by another, the sense of freedom unwinds and stretches towards greatness, for behind those words that writer in that time and that setting informs the minds of precedence and generates thought. This recognition of ones self in an others creative product becomes part of the many threads making our culture and our community, and our state and nation, resilient, extraordinary, and fulfills the democratic mandate that governs us.

Here in Oregon, of course, we have a vast and diverse set of ideas and viewpoints. We cannot allow a tyranny of a minority to use arm-chair decisions to restrict the freedom of any Oregonian to access information. At the public school level, we have an obligation to insure the equity of that principle throughout. Unlike a codified policy, there are many options available to parents to govern what their children see and encounter in the public school setting, whether that is via communication with the teacher of their child, or even through oversight and careful attention to consumable social media which is an unfettered data flow and quite ubiquitous. However, restriction of books and thoughts only increases separations and forms biased segregations.

Normalizing this non-representative impulse to restrict personal choices in a young persons formative years is a maneuver to restrict freedom. It is an insult to the sacred nature of our democratic and creative culture that thrives on diversity and must remain so for us to remain dynamic in the modern world of trade, innovation, and unforeseen emerging challenges.

We license our teachers to choose relevant and age-appropriate materials for curricular delivery in the classroom, and I do not believe that license, or its trust, is misplaced. We license of school librarians the same. We must not license freedom of thought. We must not fall into the hole of trying to block, restrict, or sentence the human mind to a less

comfortable and more barren existence, where less freedom and an anemic access to information is our answer to the world. We should not shut these freedoms from being realized, pondered even, and then understood.

Shut not your doors to me proud libraries,  
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves, yet needed most, I bring,  
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,  
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,  
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by the intellect,  
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.  
—Walt Whitman