

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

I am writing today in support of SB1583 which will prohibit discrimination when selecting textbooks, instructional materials, program materials or library books that are used in the public schools of this state.

With the rampant rise of book bans across the country, I agree that it is important for the State of Oregon to ensure that our public schools create and foster enriching and full experiences that include a wide range of materials reflecting a broad spectrum of people, histories, and stories. This bill simply asks to not discriminate in the availability of materials that include stories about people of color, LGBTQ+ people, religious people, people with disabilities or any other protected group.

As leader sponsor, Senator Lew Frederick has stated “It’s not telling people that they have to read certain things.” (Capital Chronicle interview). This is simply about ensuring our students, schools, and communities have full and complete textbooks, materials, and libraries. It is not about control which is interesting given that opposition to this bill seems to be particularly interested in controlling information and educational experiences for everyone else.

Several media outlets, for example The Washington Post, have done extensive reporting on book bans across the country and found these challenges often arise from a tiny, but vocal, minority seeking to control entire schools, school districts, local libraries, and communities. The Washington Post’s analysis of the 2021-2022 school year found that 60% of book challenges came from 11 adults. Just 11 adults! How can we possibly think that only 11 adults speak for entire schools and communities? The answer is - they don’t.

The American Library Association has polling from 2022 that over 70% of voters oppose efforts to remove books from libraries (<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/Voters-Oppose-Book-Bans-in-Libraries-AC-11-5.pdf>).

This polling also includes majority opposition to school library book bans. I will quote two points from their polling: 1: “After hearing reasons to both support and oppose efforts to remove books from school libraries because some parents find them offensive or inappropriate, voters oppose efforts to remove books from school libraries by a 34-point margin (67% oppose, 33% support)” and 2: “Similarly, after hearing arguments on both sides, parents oppose efforts to remove books from school libraries by a 22-point margin (61% oppose, 39% support), and this view holds true for parents with children of all grade levels: 59% of parents with children in pre-K through 5th grade, 66% with middle schoolers, and 64% with high schoolers oppose book removals.”

Opponents to SB1583 claim they don’t want stories about marginalized people “shoved into our kids faces” or they seek to shelter schools from “ideologically driven

content that could harm our kids” (quotes from Capital Chronicle article 2/13/2024). I would ask how books on a display shelf are shoved into kids’ faces? Why do a handful of parents get to make that determination for ALL parents? Why are some “ideologies” “harmful” but others go completely unquestioned? If individual parents have concerns about materials they can simply work with their schools’ teachers, librarians, and staff to avoid those materials for their OWN individual children - not shove THEIR ideologies in other families faces.