



Oregon Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

February 14, 2024

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kate Weber. I'm a middle school teacher-librarian and a board member of the Oregon Association of School Libraries - a professional body for school library staff in Oregon and a division of the Oregon Library Association.

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 1583 that will prevent discrimination when selecting textbooks, instructional materials, program materials or library books in public schools and hope that you will support the bill when it comes up for a vote.

If you've spoken to me before, you're likely already aware of the state of school libraries in Oregon. A majority of our state's schools do not have a licensed teacher-librarian on staff. Teacher-librarians are the people formally trained for book and material challenges.

Without someone in the school or district with this training, book challenges - more and more often based on the list of protected identities in Senate Bill 1583 - go unreported. The book is quietly removed from the shelf in an action dubbed "quiet censorship". The students who would see themselves reflected in those books are left searching for but not finding themselves.

We don't have numbers for those quietly banned titles. What we do know is that the recent spate of challenges has made school library staff less likely to purchase books with LGBTQ+ or racial themes, because of a fear of a challenge. These books are not making it to the shelf in the first place.

I want to point out that this bill won't in any way make sexually explicit materials available in schools. Challenges to materials that are not thought to be age-appropriate will still be permitted.

But by decreasing the fear of a challenge based solely on identity, school library staff will be more able to provide books that reflect the experiences of some of our

least-represented students. In addition, passing this bill will communicate to those same vulnerable students that their very existence is not shameful or frightening.

I hope you will support Senate Bill 1583 and pass the bill with the -1 or the -4 amendment to the Floor at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Weber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kate Weber  
Oregon Teacher-Librarian  
Oregon Association of School Libraries