

Submitter: Justin Pot
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1583

My name is Justin Pot and I'm a resident of Hillsboro, Oregon, and a professional technology journalist. I believe deeply in freedom of speech and have a deep passion for the integrity of our public schools. I am writing to urge you to support SB1583 to 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. This legislation will serve to clarify standards in selection of educational materials to help schools comply with existing prohibitions on discrimination. And this in turn will protect the rights of our students to a quality education that does not try to hide certain viewpoints, stories, opinions or ideas from them and leave them ill-equipped to participate fully in the vibrant, diverse, and complex society we hope they will graduate into.

I also believe it will help to safeguard our schools against the rise in actions by extremist groups across the U.S. seeking to censor school library and classroom content based solely on their wishes to suppress constitutionally protected groups like LGBTQ+-identifying people. We must protect the rights of all parents, guardians, students for their classrooms to have access to diverse representation in materials and history taught in the school setting. This does nothing to limit a parent's or guardian's right to monitor their own children's engagement with different materials and have their own discussions about them; but no person has the right to take away access to select ideas from everyone else.

Kids aren't dumb. They want to learn about a wide range of issues, from multiple points of view, and our schools should be encouraging that—not limiting their access to specific books because of the political preferences of the local school board. Please vote YES on SB1583 to help our schools foster that environment of learning and self-discovery.