

The United States Constitution says that all Americans, regardless of age have a right to Freedom of Speech. Courts have held that in order to be able to have informed speech, one must first have informed thought, which courts have further said, comes from a freedom to learn, and yes, read. Therefore, all Americans have a right to think whatever they want, to learn, whatever they want, and yes, read, whatever they want. If you reverse engineer the term “intellectual freedom” is means, freedom of your own intellect, and it is a First Amendment right.

As we look at that right, we also know that our rights are given to us at birth, they are for Americans of all ages. This means that the right to information is a right to all library users, regardless of their age, including school aged children. Children have a right to learn and grow and it is our responsibility to not infringe on those rights by censoring the ideals they have access to, especially when those ideals are rooted in voices that have been traditionally silenced, which is the case with our protected classes.

By definition: Censorship is the suppression of ideas and information that some individuals, groups, or government officials find objectionable or dangerous. Would-be censors try to use the power of the state to impose their view of what is truthful and appropriate, or offensive and objectionable, on everyone else. Censors pressure public institutions, like libraries, to suppress and remove information they judge inappropriate or dangerous from public access, so that no one else has the chance to read or view the material and make up their own minds about it. The censor wants to prejudge materials for everyone.

Opponents of SB1593 would have you believe that a library collection purged of diverse literature that may include mature language, themes, and scenes is a benefit to student development. But a study in the journal *Reading Research Quarterly* (2014) found that students who read diverse literature were more likely to demonstrate increased empathy and perspective-taking abilities compared to a control group. In addition, the American Library Association’s report, “Why Diversity Matters,” highlights the positive impact of varied literature on youth’s cognitive and affective development and how it fosters empathy, understanding and critical

thinking. SB1593 helps protect students' right to choose diverse literature, which increases their opportunity to cultivate the invaluable character traits and soft skills that are essential for [leadership roles](#) and success in one's career and personal life.

Furthermore, I'd like to point out the Oregon Department of Education provides the following [Guidance to School Districts: Addressing Challenged Materials in K-12 Education](#). It would benefit you greatly to read or reread this guidance. In the effort of saving you some time, I would like to point you to the following two paragraphs:

ODE affirms a parent's right to determine content that is not appropriate for their child and to exempt their child from those activities. **However, a parent's judgment or preference may not be extended to other students or their families. It is the role of the schools, as government bodies, to ensure that all students have equal access and opportunity to consume educational materials. Censorship in the form of challenges to books or other instructional materials seeks to restrict knowledge available to students based on individual sensitivities and concerns.** ODE strives to ensure that all students graduate college and career ready, having been exposed to a wide range of materials and schools of thought. OAR 581-021-0045, entitled Discrimination Prohibited, is designed to protect all students and keep their learning environment free from discrimination based on age, disability, national origin, race, color, marital status, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. **In a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court case, Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico, the Court held that school officials cannot remove books from a school library simply because they find the ideas in the book objectionable.** Later, in Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988), the Court ruled that any regulation of student free speech needs to be "reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns." **According to the Court, the First Amendment protects the rights of students to receive information and ideas.**

The U.S. Constitution restricts what a government may do; therefore, public schools, public school libraries and school officials are bound by obligations to uphold and protect the rights guaranteed to all students under the Constitution. A democracy relies on an informed citizenry capable of self-governance. According to the Supreme Court in Keyishian v. Board of Education (1967), "The Nation's future depends on leaders trained through wide exposure to that robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection."

Finally, I want to share with you statements provided by the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee regarding [Materials Challenges and Intellectual Freedom](#) and the [ALA Statement on Book Censorship](#). In the OIFC, I reaffirm the following statement "OLA and OIFC condemn the use of intimidation and extralegal means aimed at censorship which are antithetical to ALA's Freedom to Read statements. We fully support parents' involvement in education and guidance in

media selections for their own children, but we stand firmly behind our Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statements, and against parental overreach actions which violate the First Amendment rights and dignity of others”.

In closing, I want to remind this Legislature that you have an expectation to your community. That expectation comes from the First Amendment Rights of your constituents, which includes their right to read and learn freely. It is not your role to say to your members of your community what they can and cannot think, what they can and cannot learn, and what they can and cannot read, regardless of age. Only a parent can do that, for their own minor children. To allow for these censorship and discrimination tactics to continue (especially for protected classes), you open school system up to legal concerns, as well as further aggression tactics. It also says to those you serve that you believe you know better than they do as to what they can learn, think and read. You do not have the ability, power or control to do that and I would expect you to make your vote on this matter with that level of awareness.

Thank you.

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