

TO: House Committee on Rules

FROM: Kaylee Osowski, Deschutes Public Library

RE: Support for SB1583A

Date: Monday, March 4, 2024

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Helfrich and Kropf and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Kaylee Osowski, I am a librarian with the Deschutes Public Library and I care about the freedom to read. Today I am testifying to urge your support of SB1583A, which would prohibit discrimination when selecting textbooks and instructional materials. As a public librarian, former elementary school media specialist, Oregon resident, and proud aunt, I strongly support this bill.

While I did not grow up in Oregon, I know my experience from kindergarten through twelfth grade in the 1990s and early 2000s is similar to others of my generation in Oregon and other states. The textbooks and other educational materials I learned about United States history and government from focused on white men. I only learned about Indigenous history as it relates to Thanksgiving (this history, as it was presented to me, was inaccurate.) Black history was only taught in the context of the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. Jewish and Japanese Americans seemed to only be present during WWII. Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop published an essay titled Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors in 1990. Leaving out and discriminating against the history of minority groups is a disservice not only to minority students who do not see themselves in white history or government, but also a disservice to white students who then do not have a window into the lives of other groups and their histories.

Additionally, we are seeing books about BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ folks banned around the United States and in Oregon in schools and public libraries. When people push to ban these books, it is not about the books, it is about the groups and people these books give voice and strength to. We need bills like SB 1583 to protect the books that show our state and country's true history and lift up those who have been discriminated against for far too long.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this bill, the education of Oregon's children, and the freedom read and fully exist.

Students do not lose their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gates and book bans and censorship have no place in Oregon schools. Please support the freedom to read and learn by advancing SB1583A.

Thank you,
Kaylee Osowski