

March 4, 2024  
Oregon Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: In support of Senate Bill (SB) 1583 — a commonsense, values-based bill to curb discriminatory book bans and censorship in Oregon’s public schools

To the Esteemed Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I serve as a school board member for Tigard-Tualatin School district. We all know that we have challenges in Oregon’s public education system right now, and fixing those problems requires scarce resources for education. However, one thing we should be able to take for granted when we send our kids to school, is that they will have things like... books!

Our young people have great potential, and should be encouraged to think critically. That means they should have access to... books!

And not just books that a parent signed off that they could read, but a wide variety of books:

- So they can think through the difficult issues of our time
- So they can cultivate an appreciation for other people and experiences
- So they can see themselves in the books they read
- So they can process information and identify what part is true, real truth, not just alternative facts and make decisions accordingly.

Some people in Oregon actually want parents to “opt-in” to curriculum. I can only imagine how that opt in system would work for an avid reader like I was. What if busy parents don’t have time to preview all those books? What if a parent gets tired of reading Wings of Fire or Dog Man, or just doesn’t understand an issue their child is struggling to find community about? I hope that my kids are the kind of rebels who sneak out and get their devious little hands on... literature.

It’s not just about having books available, it’s also about blaming some piece of curriculum for Oregon’s divestment in public education, as though if we just limited the curriculum to Moby Dick we would have enough teachers, librarians, counselors and school days. It’s the same line of thinking that if we just didn’t worry so much about some of our students, the others would get a more robust education. Yet I know we have faith in each other, and we care out our kids, and our neighbor’s kids. Where we go, we go together.

We are coming out of a difficult time in history, and our young people have made sacrifices and watched us bring our issues into their schools. I stand united with those who support SB 1583 and also those who advocate for full education funding from the state budget. We can keep all the books on the shelves and provide young people with an education to understand our diverse and dynamic society and fully participate in it, with all the doors open.

Respectfully,

Crystal Weston, Tigard Tualatin School District, position 5 (positions are my own)