

Representative Susan McLain

House District 29



RE: Support for Senate Bill 1583

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Helfrich and Kropf, and Members of the Committee:

As a teacher of over 42 years, it is important to me to submit this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 1583**. Over my long teaching career, I have seen how critical it is for students to be able to see themselves in, or identify with, the stories that they read.

According to the State Library of Oregon, libraries and schools in Oregon reported challenges to more books and other materials in 2022-23 than at any point since the Library began collecting data. As the State Librarian's letter states in her own submitted testimony on OLIS,

"No matter the stated reason for a challenge, one pattern is clear: challenged materials are disproportionately about, by, or center the story of people from an underrepresented race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or disability...Over 70% of the items challenged in 2022-23 focus on one or more of those identities."

This marginalization of students through the banning of books is exactly why this bill is necessary and why I support it.

It is important to note that this bill **does not change, impose, or make requirements on School Districts. It just makes it clear in statute that discrimination is prohibited.** This bill **does not change current local school selection processes of materials or educational curricula.** School officials will continue to be **free to make decisions about their educational curriculum.** SB 1583A **will not prevent them from considering age, vulgarity, and/or educational value as they make their selection decisions or consider book challenges. Parents will also be able to continue to submit complaints and concerns.**

What this bill does is ensure that students who may already feel marginalized or isolated can read books that center on identities and stories that they can relate to. Books have the power to uplift, to make us feel seen, and to tell stories in a way that allows us to understand not just ourselves but each other. As a teacher, it was always my hope that every student could find that one book they connected with and that gave them a sense of belonging. SB 1583 protects our most marginalized students and gives them that opportunity for discovery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan McLain".

Representative Susan McLain