



From: Isabela Villarreal, Next Up Action Fund
RE: Support for SB 1583A

Tuesday, March 5th, 2024

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Helfrich and Kropf, and Members of the committee,

My name is Isabela Villarreal and I'm the Policy and Communications Director at Next Up Action Fund. Our organization has been around since 2002, and our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. We're an organization led by and working with predominantly Black, Indigenous, and youth of color. What we want most is a world that values and invests in them, and to do so we need to make sure that their lived experiences are reflected in the books they have access to. Thus, we are in strong support of SB 1583A.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+ topics or individuals and restrict access for students to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, for example librarians and educators. It also ensures people have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities and selves, and creates more room for understanding over prejudice in Oregon.

We create a better world when we allow our young people to learn freely and when we stand strong against discrimination. As a queer woman of color, I know firsthand the importance of young people being able to see themselves and their communities reflected in the books they read. I still hold dear the moments from childhood when I got the opportunity to read books in school that reflected me and my communities identities and histories - those moments reminded me that our histories are not illegal, nor are they extracurricular: they are vibrant, valid, and an important part of our collective knowledge. Reading books rich in culture is an opportunity for our young people to imagine new realities which is critical to the civic engagement process.

We hope you will schedule a work session as soon as possible, and vote yes to support and advance SB 1583 before this session ends.

Thank you,

Isabela Villarreal
Policy and Communications Director