

**TRAVIS NELSON**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
HOUSE DISTRICT 44  
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1583

March 5, 2024

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knop and members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Travis Nelson and I represent House District 44. I write today in support of Senate Bill 1583 which aims at fortifying our anti-discrimination laws within our education systems here in Oregon. I believe this bill is much more than a legal formality, but a necessary step towards a more just and inclusive educational environment for all our students.

For the record we do have laws that require an inclusive selection of instructional materials and generally prohibit discrimination in education. However, SB 1583 sets forth a clear mandate that explicitly protects Oregon students and the educational materials made available to them from discrimination based on race, national origin, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical or mental disability, military status, or marital or family status.

Simply put, we do not want our education systems to have any limitations on materials that are put forth towards learning. The 2022-23 academic year witnessed a record number of attempts to ban books in the U.S, reflecting a disturbing trend towards censorship and the erasure of diverse histories and experiences. Such actions not only deplete our educational discourse, but also deny students the opportunity to see themselves reflected in their learning materials—a critical component of fostering a sense of belonging and understanding in our increasingly diverse society.

This bill will also dismiss any attempt to assault the principles of freedom of expression and access to information. Such challenges disproportionately impact materials featuring race, racism, sexism and LGBTQ2SIA+ identities and undermine our collective efforts to provide a culturally responsive and inclusive education.

I also want to be clear, SB 1583 does not mandate what materials are being presented, but rather does not allow materials to be banned within the protected criteria. Parents and guardians can still request to remove books, and school administrators are free to consider those requests. SB 1583 will not prevent school boards and staff from considering age appropriateness, obscenity, and educational value in selection decisions.

SB 1583 is a clear statement of our values as a society. It embodies our commitment to creating an educational environment where every student can learn, grow, and see themselves reflected in the stories and histories that shape our world. I stand as a legislator and openly LGBTQ2SIA+ Black man, in support of SB 1583 which I believe stands against discrimination, censorship, and the erasure of diverse voices and continues to affirm a more equitable Oregon.

Please vote yes in support of Senate Bill 1583. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Travis Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

State Representative Travis Nelson  
House District 44, North/NE Portland