

March 6, 2024
Re: Support SB 1583

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

“A dangerous book will always be in danger from those it threatens with the demand that they question their assumptions. They'd rather hang on to the assumptions and ban the book.”
— Ursula K. Le Guin

My name is Steph Routh, and sadly I have not authored a book important enough to be challenged or banned. Instead, I write to you as someone who loves what books do for us: they open us to new possibilities, invite us to a deeper understanding of those whose lives are different from our own, affirm our own experiences when we feel alone and “other,” and help us imagine a future we cannot see with our eyes but know is possible thanks to our supported imaginations. Please support SB 1583 and ban book bans.

As I type, I am sipping from my “Banned Books” mug, which I got while visiting the Library of Congress some years ago. Here are some of the books represented on this mug:

Animal Farm - Ms. Rutledge read this to our 8th grade class at Parkrose Middle School. We were challenged to consider cycles of oppression;

The Social Contract - this served as a foundational document for the US Declaration of Independence (dangerous to the monarchy, for sure!);

Les Misérables - my Mom and I saw the musical based on this banned book at the Keller Auditorium. A delightful evening!

The Catcher in the Rye - we read this book in high school, and I had to read it again several years later to “get it,” because it turns out that when you read a book as an adolescent about adolescence, well, it's hard to see why it's remarkable.

The Origin of the Species - apparently someone was against finches?

The American Library Association's list of most banned books from 2010-2019 is a breathtaking display of what one can reasonably conclude to be a movement of erasure and discrimination. (you can check it out here:

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/decade2019>)

I am queer and grew up feeling like I was alone and somehow “wrong.” It was books in part that saved me. I am so grateful to authors who create belonging through their work, and I am grateful to SB 1583's sponsors.

Thank you for your attention and time. Please pass SB 1583.

Sincerely,
Steph Routh