

Wednesday March 6, 2024

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Kropf and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the House Rules Committee,

We write today in support of SB 1583, which prohibits discrimination when selecting textbooks, instructional materials, program materials or library books that are used in the public schools of the State of Oregon.

Oregonians have seen multiple efforts to remove books from library shelves that deal with topics relevant to women, persons with disabilities, persons of color, and LGBTQIA+ communities -- including, but not limited to, the *existence* of transgender or nonbinary persons. These conversations are couched in terms of protecting children, but they do no such thing. On the contrary, they lead to an environment of fear, wherein kids who do not fit in the mainstream of Oregon are made to feel like outsiders because their existence and experiences become forbidden topics in official circles.

Opposition to this bill, and proponents of such bans, couch their arguments in terms of parental rights. SB 1583 would forbid a book from being banned or restricted merely because it discusses matters pertaining to a protected class. It allows restrictions for other reasons that a parent might find relevant, such as age-inappropriate language. It allows parents to examine educational materials that their children use. What this bill forbids is the practice, now too common, of removing books because the topic of the book pertains to a protected class. This bill protects free speech and free discussion in Oregon, and it deserves passage.

We urge the committee to approve this bill with a *do pass* recommendation.

Sincerely,

Michael Smith, Assistant District Leader for HD 46 and Vice-Chair *Emeritus*,
Multnomah County Democrats

Liv Rainey-Smith, Printmaker and Author