

Submitter: Thomas Hiura
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: SB1583

My name is Thomas Hiura and I am a lifelong Oregonian from Eugene. I am 30 years old, serving as Vice Chair of the Eugene Human Rights Commission, and as an active board member with the City Club of Eugene and the WOW Hall. In my professional life I have worked in college guidance counseling and student services, and I remain connected to education primarily through multimedia literacy advocacy and audio/visual production. I am writing as a private individual.

My background prepares me to deeply understand what we all intuitively know: children's lives are creatively and practically enriched by a wide range of books and stories. Young minds are empowered by the written word, as language is a framework for our subconscious thinking. Too many examples from today's book-banning movement are functionally telling young adults "you are not permitted to develop an ability to think about these topics." It is easier to ban a book than to have a fair and fact-based discussion about its potential appropriateness, merits and flaws. One is a truth-seeking act of courage, while the other is too often a censorious act of fear.

K-12 children's experience of the world is somewhat limited to the scope of what surrounds them. However, through literature, curious minds can expand the scope of their imagination, make cross-cultural connections and be inspired by a wide range of solutions to problems in their own lives. If they are to encounter difficult topics in life, what better way than through the intentional educational context of a school book?

SB 1583 contains a highly specific definition of discrimination, targeting discriminatory practices of literary censorship that do not belong here in Oregon. This educational obstruction often puts our kids at a competitive disadvantage, too. This is not about partisanship or demonization. It is not about safeguarding the rights of parents and local school boards (both of which are noble aims). Not long ago, it seems book bans were condemned by a greater consensus of society. Harper Lee wrote the famously banned book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and went on to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom from George W. Bush. Republican President Dwight Eisenhower once said, "Don't join the book burners. Don't think you are going to conceal faults by concealing the evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go into your library and read every book."

As a Eugene School District 4J graduate, I am grateful for SB 1583. Please pass this bill so that my own children, too, can go on to enjoy library resources free of political gamesmanship.