

Submitter: Norm Baxter

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and members of the committee.

My name is Norm Baxter from Salem, Oregon, and I am writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 1098, which will prohibit discrimination based on the race, religion, ability, country of origin, sexuality, or gender of the individuals featured in the content of educational and library materials in K-12 public schools in Oregon.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+, Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color. The suppression of topics and/or individuals denies students the right to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, such as librarians and educators. It also ensures students have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities, and selves.

As a retired educator I have learned firsthand the importance of making sure that students must have the absolute right to see themselves and others represented in the books, materials, and classrooms they learn from and to learn about diverse communities and people. Denying students this right is the first step in marginalizing individuals and entire communities. That marginalization inevitably leads to isolation, which in turn leads to persecution of those who are different. Individuals and groups who differ in any way from those who represent an artificially created norm can find themselves exposed to threats and violence. Unfortunately, our nation and the state of Oregon provide many, many disappointing examples of such behavior. Passage of Senate Bill 1098 will be a big step forward in ameliorating the devastating effects of excluding diverse communities and individuals.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story today. I urge you to vote YES to support and advance Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you,  
Norm Baxter