

Submitter: Jim Scheppke

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

Chair Frederick and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of SB 1098. I am proud to have worked at the State Library in 1987 when we established the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse to track challenges to library materials in public, academic and school libraries. That was the heyday of the Oregon Citizens Alliance and other hate groups that sought to purge libraries of books they found objectionable. I would have never thought back then that 38 years later this would still be happening in our state, but as the State Librarian has reported to you in her testimony, we set a record for challenges last year. She writes that "87% of the items challenged told the stories of one or more underrepresented groups. 66% of challenged materials focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ people, while 22% centered Black, Indigenous, or people of color." This is shocking, and points to the urgent need to pass SB 1098 this year.

I also strongly support the provision in SB 1098 for technical assistance and guidance from the Oregon Department of Education to strengthen school library programs in the state which have been terribly underfunded and neglected in recent years. You are probably aware of the recent NAEP 4th grade reading scores that show Oregon at the bottom of demographically adjusted scores, and Mississippi, amazingly, at the top. You should be interested to learn that Mississippi requires certified teacher librarians in all of its elementary schools. Oregon does not, and most elementary schools no longer have librarians. Perhaps that should be addressed in future legislation, but for now providing more assistance from the Oregon Department of Education for school libraries is badly needed.

I will greatly appreciate your support of SB 1098.

Jim Scheppke (State Librarian of Oregon, 1991-2011)  
Salem