

My name is Skylar, calling in from Milwaukie. I am here today to speak up in favor of Senate Bill 1098.

I ask the legislatures gathered here today to think back to their own adolescence. I think we can all agree those years are the most complex, confusing, and frightening years of our lives. Trying to figure out who we are, what we believe in, and where we belong are challenges that all young people must overcome. For many such as myself, reading provided a safe space where I could explore my feelings and learn from the stories I loved how to stand up for myself, and for those in our communities that are so often disproportionately targeted by the discriminatory assaults on free speech.

As a member of the LGBT+ community, I can attest with deep personal connection to the significance of recognizing representation for people like myself in the books I read. Knowing there were other people who shared my experience of questioning my sexuality - people whose stories were being celebrated - gave me the courage to embrace my true self and live my life, unafraid and unashamed.

Free speech should not only apply when those in power agree with what is being said. Book bans deprive those at their most vulnerable the support to see that their experiences are shared, and their voices should be honored. I implore you to take a stand once and for all, to support Senate Bill 1098, and to show all children of Oregon their stories are worth telling.