

WHY IS THIS BILL NECESSARY?

1. **BOOK BANS ARE AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH**, both nationally and in Oregon.
2. **DISCRIMINATORY IMPACT:** Consistent with national trends, the books under attack in Oregon are often by or about people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ people. In addition, books deemed “negative” or “depressing” have been banned. When books and materials are banned or censored, this erases the history and lived experiences of marginalized groups and silences important learnings and discussions about race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, economic hardship, etc.
3. **RESEARCH FINDS THAT OREGON STUDENTS IN MARGINALIZED GROUPS ALREADY FACE INTOLERANCE.**
4. **CURRENT LAWS ARE NOT ENOUGH:** Although existing laws require an inclusive selection of instructional materials and generally prohibit discrimination in education, no current law explicitly prohibits the censorship of materials based on the protected identities involved in the material’s content or creation.

WHAT DOES THIS BILL PROTECT?

1. **IT PROTECTS FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS.**

2. IT PROTECTS SCHOOL EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES.

3. IT PROTECTS FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY:

Democracy is undermined when a minority forces their own preferences and judgments on the rest of us by pressuring government authorities to take books off library shelves and ideas out of public classrooms — simply because the minority doesn't agree with the content.

4. IT PROTECTS STUDENT WELLBEING AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS:

Research shows that students who receive a culturally responsive and racially inclusive education are more academically engaged, perform better in school, have enhanced self-perception and graduate at higher rates.⁷ Accordingly, educators across the state are urging lawmakers to support students and Freedom to Read.

PERSONAL NOTE: As a child with albinism and a severe visual impairment, I did not fit in in school. Books became a refuge for me. I would lose myself in the worlds created by authors ranging from Aldous Huxley and Hermann Hesse to Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. And when I could not accept the authoritarianism of my parents and teachers, I turned to philosophy, sociology, and psychology texts for guidance in fashioning a more compassionate, tolerant, and joyful

way of being. Because I was such an avid reader, I excelled in school and was able to imagine a much different and better future for myself. I have spent my years as a professor sharing my love of knowledge and quest for wisdom with my students.

All students need and deserve the freedom to explore, learn, and grow by delving into others' experiences and recognizing that none of us is alone.