

Submitter: Debbie Levy  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

As a high school teacher librarian and a parent of an elementary student, I support SB 1098, which prohibits discriminatory censorship in school classrooms and libraries. It is essential that Oregon school libraries and classrooms offer books that represent students of all races, ethnicities, religions, gender identities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses.

I have witnessed the crucial role diverse library books hold for students. A few years ago, for instance, one of my high school students used to laugh at LGBTQ+ books in the library. After we had several discussions about inclusion and respect, he started borrowing LGBTQ+ books but hiding them among other books he borrowed. Two years later, he openly borrowed books on LGBTQ+ themes and characters and he wore rainbow clothing with pride. These books helped him process and ultimately embrace his identity.

I have also seen how much of a difference books by authors of color have made for my students. One Black student literally shouted for joy when she saw a book called Black Enough. She later told me it was the best book she ever read. After recently recommending the book The Poet X to a Latina senior, she told me the book felt like her life and she had never seen herself in a book before.

These books matter to all students. Many of my students enjoy and appreciate reading books about people who have different backgrounds and experiences, which helps them build understanding, compassion and empathy. When students read books that they appreciate and enjoy, their literacy skills increase even more.

Oregon students deserve the right to read these age-appropriate books that are carefully curated. Teacher librarians are professionals who follow district policies and selection criteria to ensure a diverse collection that meets their school's needs.

SB 1098 is an essential bill for Oregon students. Please vote yes and support this bill.

Sincerely,  
Debbie Levy  
Oregon Secondary Teacher Librarian of the Year, 2024-2025 (awarded by the Oregon Association of School Libraries)