



CONSOLIDATED OREGON INDIVISIBLE NETWORK

To: Senate Education Committee
From: Legislative Team of COIN
Re: Testimony Endorsing SB 1098: Freedom to Read
Date: March 3, 2025

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I write today on behalf of the Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) in endorsement of SB 1098. COIN is a coalition of over 50 local Indivisible groups throughout Oregon that cooperate and amplify their joint efforts to advance important federal and state legislation and engage with elected officials to promote progressive causes for the benefit of all Oregonians.

We strongly endorse SB 1098, Freedom to Read.

The ability to read is a gateway to knowledge. Access to all types of books is important because, to learn, we need to be exposed to beliefs that are different than our own. To grow intellectually, we must be able to compare our ideas with others, then defend our ideas or modify and improve them. Information, awareness and understanding come to students from varied sources to build critical thinking skills, increase empathy for others, and self awareness. Our children deserve access to diverse resources for their future success so that they may contribute to the success of the broader community.

Safe and inclusive learning environments are necessary in order for students to thrive. Censorship efforts often target books about people of color and LGBTQI+ people. Censorship of such books risks further isolating students who identify with these groups, and normalizes discrimination.

Parents are certainly entitled to restrict their own children from reading books they find offensive, but they do not have the right to prohibit other children from reading books of their choice. Book censorship deprives the majority of their personal choices and gives control to often a very small minority. This is not how a democracy should work. This is not freedom.

Plainly stated, SB 1098 prohibits the banning of school library materials, textbooks and instructional materials whose authors and topics are protected under Oregon's discrimination law ORS 659.850. We firmly support students' freedom to read books with a variety of perspectives to enrich their lives.

Please pass SB 1098, Freedom to Read, to promote this form of free speech in a time that it is fiercely needed.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline C. Brown (Milwaukie)
COIN Legislative Team
<https://www.coinoregon.com>