

Submitter: Abigail Mortimer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

Dear Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Abby Mortimer from Clatsop County and I am writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 1098, which will prohibit discrimination based on the race, religion, ability, country of origin, sexuality, or gender of the individuals featured in the content of educational and library materials in K-12 public schools in Oregon.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+, Black people, Indigenous people and other people of color. topics or individuals and restrict access for students to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, for example librarians and educators. It also ensures students have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities and selves.

As an avid proponent of information literacy and critical thinking skills as a queer, disabled librarian and archivist in a community college where most students attend after K-12 at public school, I know that all students deserve to see themselves represented in the books, materials and classrooms they learn from and to learn about diverse communities and people. Learning about one another builds an informed and educated society, which can only enhance our freedom and ability to participate in democratic processes. It is with access to ALL information that we are able to build a moral compass and critical thinking skills to guide us through the diversity of experiences and knowledges in the world.

Additionally, the right to free speech – which is set out as the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution – is recognized as foundational to our democracy:

- Freedom of speech guarantees us the right to hear all sides of every issue and to make our own judgments without government interference or limitations.
- By creating safeguards around government censorship of books, magazines and newspapers, as well as art, film, music and materials on the internet, the right to free speech protects us from government attempts to suppress ideas and information.
- Courts have said that the First Amendment protects not just the right to speak but the right to receive information. In other words, all of us, including young people, have a right to access a diverse range of stories and perspectives.

-Furthermore, those of us with non-dominant identities have the right to hear stories and perspectives that reflect our experiences and communities. Representation matters

Senate Bill 1098 protects student's right to see themselves represented in the books, materials and classrooms they learn from and to learn about diverse communities and people.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story today. We urge you to vote YES to support and advance Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you,

Abby Mortimer (she/they)