

Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

March 3, 2025

Re: In support of Senate Bill SB 1098 — a commonsense, values-based bill to curb discriminatory book bans and censorship in Oregon's public schools

Senator Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

I serve as a school board member for Tigard-Tualatin School district. We have unprecedented challenges facing Oregon's public education system right now, including uncertainty about federal funding and radical attacks against the very idea of a diverse country. The United States is a place where we come together around shared ideals and rights, but where we can worship, love and honor our heritage in a rainbow of ways. People like me, with ancestry ranging from across the globe, find belonging in this plurality. The ideal of a cultural monolith is fundamentally un-American.

When we send our kids to school, those schools should not turn away from our complexity, from the very young people who we seek to uplift. Our young people have great potential, and should be encouraged to think critically. That means they should have access to... books!

And not just books that a parent signed off that they could read, but a wide variety of books:

- So they can think through the difficult issues of our time
- So they can cultivate an appreciation for other people and experiences
- So they can see themselves in the books they read
- So they can process information and identify what part is true, real truth, not just alternative facts, and make decisions accordingly.

Some people in Oregon actually want parents to "opt-in" to curriculum. I can only imagine how that opt in system would work for an avid reader like I was. What if busy parents don't have time to preview all those books? What if a parent gets tired of reading *Wings of Fire* or *Dog Man*, or just doesn't understand an issue their child is struggling to find community about? I hope that my kids are the kind of rebels who sneak out and get their devious little hands on... literature.

It's not just about having books available, it's also about blaming some piece of curriculum for Oregon's divestment in public education, as though if we just limited the curriculum to *Moby Dick* we would have enough teachers, librarians, counselors and school days. It's the same line of thinking that if we just didn't worry so much about some of our students, the others would get a more robust education. Yet I know we have faith in each other, and we care out our kids, and our neighbor's kids.

Once again, our young people are watching us bring our issues into their schools. I stand united with those who support SB 1098 and also those who advocate for full education funding from the state budget. We can keep all the books on the shelves and provide young people with an education to understand our diverse and dynamic society and fully participate in it, with all the doors open.

Respectfully,

Crystal Weston
Tigard resident
Tigard Tualatin School District, position 5 (positions are my own)