

Dear Esteemed Members of the Senate Education Committee:

We, the Oregon Public Education Network, strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 1098 which will strengthen our public schools by providing the library resources needed for all of Oregon's students to thrive and understand the importance of tolerance and generosity. Our organization has worked diligently for many years to build up our public school system, not to break it down. We want our students to gain the greatest education we can provide them with to feel valued and achieve the success they rightly deserve. Our current laws are not enough to protect our students' well-being and academic success. We need a law that will safeguard their constitutional right to read and learn about the history, experiences and viewpoints of all communities.

Lately, we have seen too many of our children's lives threatened because of fear, prejudice, and intolerance. Most parents and guardians trust teachers and librarians to make decisions about age-appropriate materials for our students. This bill, if it becomes law, will not prevent school boards and staff from considering age, obscenity and educational value when selecting reading content.

Early literacy has become a priority in our public schools, and it must be noted that, in addition to structured classroom reading instruction, exposure to a variety of books at multiple reading levels and support for independent reading is critical to raising student test scores in all aspects of literacy.

We would like to end with this quote from the Oregon Association of School Libraries. "Access to culturally relevant and responsive books fosters an early love of learning and a sense of belonging while also positively affecting reading achievement and appears to offset the impact of poverty."

We hope you agree that this bill is crucial for our public-school students and our society to prosper.

We thank you!

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