

TO: Oregon Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Karen Krajcer, private citizen, Portland

RE: Support for SB 1098

Dear Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and Committee Members:

My name is Karen Krajcer, and I live in Portland. I urge you to support SB 1098, a bill that pursues Oregon's commitment to keeping discrimination out of our schools.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA+ people, Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color. SB 1098 is an effort to ensure that students have access to these stories. The bill doesn't change any individual parent's or guardian's right to oversee what their children read or view. Just as we are critical of government overreach into our private lives, so are we critical of the ability of small groups of extremists to dictate what the public cannot read.

As a former high school English teacher, I know that literature provides both mirrors and doors to students: mirrors in which they can see themselves and know that their lives matter and doors through which they can enter the perspectives of others. Diverse stories help us to develop empathy and ensure that we support the larger community.

Book bans and censorship are deeply undemocratic and harmful because our democracy contains people of different beliefs, perspectives and backgrounds. The state has a responsibility (and privilege) to educate the public, *all* of it. When books about historically-disenfranchised groups are banned in libraries and schools, this signals that discrimination and exclusion of people with these identities is acceptable.

With the passage of SB 1098, caregivers would maintain their right to voice challenges against specific books. But just as people don't want the government coming in and telling them what they should and shouldn't do, we don't want people from outside of our district dictating what our schools should and should not teach.

I was born and raised in Texas, a state that has called for sweeping book bans and censorship. I am deeply grateful to raise my two children in Oregon, a state that supports diversity and free speech. SB 1098 protects our children'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 listening. I urge you to vote YES to support and advance SB 1098.

Sincerely,

Karen Krajcer