

Dear Committee,

For the record, I am Kasey Fernandez, Library Media Specialist, and parent speaking in strong support of Senate Bill 1098.

As a library media specialist, I am committed to providing students with access to a diverse range of materials that reflect the rich tapestry of our world. While the majority of our students and families appreciate inclusive materials, including age-appropriate PK-12 LGBTQ+ materials, we still face attempts at book censorship.

Often, those seeking to ban books haven't read the materials, basing complaints on isolated passages or misunderstandings. They may not grasp how healing and restorative positive, age-appropriate representation can be for students from underrepresented communities. Unwarranted book concerns waste time and energy and cause unnecessary alarm.

Efforts to ban inclusive materials harm students in multiple ways:

- **Restricting Access to Diverse Materials:** This hinders students' capacity to understand themselves and others, and diminishes their ability to spot personal and global injustice and advocate for change.
- **Sanitizing the Curriculum:** This harms everyone, denying the rich understanding that comes from learning about history and current topics from multiple perspectives.
- **Isolating Students:** When students don't see themselves reflected in materials, it sends a signal that they aren't included. This can exacerbate segregation, disconnection, and disengagement, widening societal divides and harming student safety and wellbeing.

SB 1098 ensures that school staff will be supported when they provide access to inclusive literature, a right protected by the American Library Association's Bill of Rights and the National Council of Teachers of English. School Boards should not be given the power to make decisions that violate these nationwide rights.

Furthermore, similar legislation protecting intellectual freedom and student access to information has been successfully passed in other states. For example, Illinois recently enacted [Public Act 103-0100](#), a law that prohibits school libraries from banning books based on partisan or doctrinal disapproval. This law serves as a model for protecting students' First Amendment rights and ensuring access to a wide range of perspectives and ideas.

I urge you to support our students and staff and pass SB 1098. Thank you for your time and consideration!