

Submitter: Clare Sobotka
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

To Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of SB 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.

As a librarian and a reader, I know it is important for students to see themselves reflected in their community. Among the many benefits mentioned by other letter writers, it can help a child feel hope and a sense that their community is worth building and working hard for. It is equally important that students experience and build empathy for lives that are different from their own, so that they see others as partners in building a world of possibility, not just unknown strangers to be tolerated and worked around. These are the skills needed to maintain and enrich our communities, alongside traditional subjects like writing and math.

This bill can help stop the banning of books and other materials based on discrimination. That does not mean schools need to host every book under the sun. Schools are still responsible for and have the right to select age-appropriate material. All teachers, librarians, and school administrators I know who work with children have studied child development and work hard to select appropriate material, and I have not seen proof that our schools are dens of iniquity.

If none of that convinces you, then know that banning books and curriculum wastes taxpayer dollars. Administrators, teachers, librarians, and board members are forced to spend time on the issue rather than helping our children learn. Materials that have already been bought with taxpayer money get thrown out. Kayla Jimenez reported in USA Today that between labor costs and materials costs, book banning has cost K-12 districts across the U.S. thousands of dollars (Jimenez 2023). One estimate places the cost of banning a single book at \$575.00 (Jensen 2022).

This bill does not prevent parents from having a say in what their child reads, but it will protect the rights of all to access enriching material. Please vote in support of SB 1098.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jensen, Kelly. "How Much Does a Book Challenge Cost?: This Week's Book

Censorship News, March 4, 2022.” BOOK RIOT, 4 Mar. 2022, bookriot.com/book-censorship-news-march-4-2022/.

Jimenez, Kayla. “‘Book-Banning Crusade’ across the U.S.: What Does It Cost American Taxpayers?” USA TODAY, 10 Nov. 2023, www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/11/10/schools-strapped-for-cash-are-tapping-into-funding-to-remove-books/71294374007/.