

Submitter: Elicia Blackford

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

My name is Elicia Blackford, and I am a teacher in Oregon. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1098. As an educator, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that inclusive and diverse materials have on our students. When students encounter literature and content that reflect their own experiences and identities, it fosters a sense of belonging and validation. Conversely, exposure to perspectives different from their own cultivates empathy, broadens understanding, and prepares them to engage thoughtfully in our diverse society.?

Senate Bill 1098 addresses the troubling trend of removing or restricting access to materials that represent marginalized communities. Such actions not only deprive students of comprehensive educational experiences but also send a harmful message that certain voices and stories are less valuable. By establishing clear guidelines against discriminatory censorship, this bill ensures that all students have the opportunity to explore a wide array of narratives and viewpoints, which is essential for their intellectual and social development.?

Furthermore, the bill's provision for the Department of Education to offer technical assistance and guidance to school libraries is a crucial step toward strengthening our educational infrastructure. This support will empower educators and librarians to make informed decisions about their collections and curricula, fostering environments where every student feels seen and respected.

In my teaching experience, I have observed that students who engage with diverse materials are more likely to develop critical thinking skills and exhibit greater cultural awareness. They become more adept at analyzing complex issues and are better prepared to navigate the multifaceted world beyond the classroom. By passing Senate Bill 1098, we affirm our commitment to providing an education that is both inclusive and enriching for all students.?

Thank you for considering my testimony. I urge you to vote in favor of Senate Bill 1098 to promote a more inclusive and equitable educational environment in Oregon.

Sincerely,  
Elicia Blackford