

Submitter: Kahlia Waters  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

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

My name is Kahlia Waters from Silverton and I am writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 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.

Freedom of information is a corner stone of a health democracy and I'm troubled that's it's being threatened. In Oregon, we have seen lots of efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+, Black people, Indigenous people and other people of color. They're banning books at the local high school in my town, instead of cultivating critical thinking skills in the students, helping them to use their own discernment when encountering a wide variety of view points. This bill will ensure freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, for example librarians and educators. It also ensures students have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities and selves.

I was raised in a conservative and oppressive religious community where information of the wider world was deemed dangerous and women were expected to stay home and raise children, with no hope for a career. My local library was a safe haven giving me examples of women as scientists, doctors, lawyers and world leaders. The library I grew up with had plenty of books showing a wide diversity in people, their experiences and religions. Helping me realize there was a great deal of opportunity well beyond what I was taught at home.

Please give the librarians and libraries the support they need to continue to be a safe haven of information freedom. Please don't let conservative groups pressure the government to censor the stories of people and communities who have been historically disenfranchised and marginalized.

Senate Bill 1098 protects student'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 taking the time to hear my story today. We urge you to vote YES to support and advance Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you,  
Kahlia Waters