

Submitter: Eessa Vanderspek
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

My name is Eessa Vanderspek from Corvallis, OR, 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.

In Oregon, we have seen countless efforts to ban books that feature LGBTQIA2S+, Black people, Indigenous people and other people of color, topics or individuals and restrict access for students to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring 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.

As a concerned citizen of the United States, I know how important it is for people to share stories. Books give us the ability to gain perspectives different from our own and to relate with others from different backgrounds. I support this bill so that kids can have access to all histories and cultures, and learn from the wrongs of the past to create a better world for the future.

Please keep in mind, history does not repeat, it rhymes. Book bans and censorship are not the solution. Growing up, my grandma would share what she experienced growing up in Nazi occupied Holland. I distinctly remember her sharing about book burnings, and the hatred that was spawned in her communities using minorities as scapegoats. It sickens me to see these tactics now being used again against our neighbors, friends, and relatives. Stories connect us, book bans divide us.

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.

We urge you to vote YES to support and advance Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you,

Eessa Vanderspek