

Submitter: Meghan Rogers-Czarnecki  
On Behalf Of: SB1098  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

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

My name is Meghan Rogers-Czarnecki from Newberg 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 someone who is parenting Black and queer children and teens in what can feel like a very white place, I know how important it is for our youth to see their stories reflected in the books they read, and to know that they are not alone and there is nothing wrong with them. As a disabled person myself, I have scoured library shelves looking for stories that reflect my own experience. I support this bill so that children can have access to all histories and cultures, and so no one is limited by political whims.

Senate Bill 1098 protects people's right to see themselves represented in the books, materials and classrooms they learn from and to learn about diverse communities and people.

Book bans and censorship are deeply undemocratic and harmful because our democracy contains people of different beliefs, perspectives and backgrounds.

The right to free speech – which is set out as the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution – is recognized as foundational to our democracy:

Freedom of speech guarantees us the right to hear all sides of every issue and to make our own judgments without government interference or limitations.

By creating safeguards around government censorship of books, magazines and

newspapers, as well as art, film, music and materials on the internet, the right to free speech protects us from government attempts to suppress ideas and information.

Courts have said that the First Amendment protects not just the right to speak but the right to receive information. In other words, all of us, including young people, have a right to access a diverse range of stories and perspectives.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1969 that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." This is true for other fundamental rights, as well.

Furthermore, those of us with non-dominant identities have the right to hear stories and perspectives that reflect our experiences and communities. Representation matters.

Democracy is undermined when oppressive minority groups force their own preferences and judgments on communities by pressuring government entities to take books off library shelves and ideas out of public classrooms because the minority doesn't approve of its content.

It also undermines our democracy when these groups pressure the government to censor the stories of people and communities who have been historically disenfranchised and marginalized.

When books about historically-disenfranchised groups – including Black, Indigenous, and people of color and LGBTQ+ people – are banned in libraries and schools, this signals that discrimination, exclusion, and othering of youth and students with these identities is acceptable.

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,  
Meghan Rogers-Czarnecki