

Submitter: Christina Ory
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 Christina Ory, and I am an Art Teacher at Siuslaw Middle School in Florence, OR. I am writing today to urge you to support Senate Bill 1098, which will prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, ability, country of origin, sexuality, or gender in the content of educational and library materials in K-12 public schools in Oregon.

In our state, we've witnessed growing efforts to challenge and ban books that represent diverse groups, including LGBTQIA2S+, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. Over the past five years, the number of book challenges has risen by 231%. Senate Bill 1098 would create a statewide standard that ensures all students have access to information that is both accurate and representative of their histories, communities, and identities. This bill would not only protect the rights of students but also support educators and school staff who are dedicated to providing an inclusive, fair, and welcoming learning environment.

As an art teacher, I know how crucial it is for students to see themselves reflected in the world around them. It's not just about books; it's about the art, images, and stories they are exposed to in all subjects. When schools start banning books about LGBTQIA+ youth, Black and Indigenous communities, and other historically marginalized groups, it sends a message that these stories – and the people behind them – are not important. This harms students who belong to these communities and also limits the understanding and empathy of those who don't.

In my school district, the Siuslaw School Board is currently considering banning the book *Flamer* by Mike Curato. This powerful story about a BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ youth touches on important issues like suicide prevention, identity, and self-acceptance. As a teacher, I know that books like *Flamer* help students connect to their own feelings and struggles, or better understand the experiences of others. When schools take away these opportunities, they limit our students' growth and their ability to empathize with the world around them.

I strongly urge you to vote YES for Senate Bill 1098, as it will ensure that all students, regardless of their background or identity, have the opportunity to see themselves reflected in what they read and learn. This bill is vital for creating a more inclusive, equitable, and empathetic future for all of our children.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my perspective today. I ask for your support in advancing Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you,
Christina Ory
Art Teacher, Siuslaw Middle School

Florence, OR