

3/4/2025

For the record, my name is Willis Homann, and I am a Government Relations Specialist for the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). On behalf of over 25,000 educators across all 36 Oregon counties, we appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1098.

OSEA represents classified educators at every level of public education. Among them are the dedicated library professionals who keep our school libraries running—often without the resources and support they need. This is especially true at a time when challenges to educational materials are increasing, and the number of certified librarians is on the decline.

Across Oregon, school library professionals are facing mounting challenges over the books they offer on their shelves. In 20 of our 36 counties, school library materials have been challenged—and the vast majority of these challenges target stories about one or more underrepresented groups. At the same time, the number of certified school librarians is decreasing, leaving classified staff to fill the gaps. Unlike certified librarians, classified library professionals often do not have the same training, institutional support, or authority to respond to these challenges. Yet, they remain on the front lines, ensuring students have access to the books and materials they need to learn and grow.

For many classified library professionals, navigating these challenges is an increasingly difficult task. Without clear policies or guidance, staff struggle to balance community concerns while upholding the principles of open access to information. In some cases, library professionals feel pressured to remove or limit access to books preemptively, simply to avoid conflict. These situations add stress to an already demanding job and put additional strain on school staff who are already being asked to do more with fewer resources, year after year.

This issue does not exist in a vacuum. School libraries serve as critical learning hubs, providing students with access to information, fostering a love of reading, and helping develop essential literacy skills. When external pressures disrupt that mission, it affects not just the staff responsible for managing these spaces but also the students who rely on them. Ensuring that library professionals—both classified and certified—have the tools and protections they need to maintain a diverse, well-rounded collection is essential to supporting student learning.

By passing SB 1098 and prohibiting the discriminatory removal of educational materials, we take an important step in providing that support. This bill reinforces trust in the expertise of school staff, reduces uncertainty for library professionals facing these challenges, and helps maintain stability in our schools.

Oregon voters overwhelmingly trust educators to determine appropriate educational materials. Yet a small but vocal group of individuals are responsible for the majority of challenges to educational materials. These challenges create an environment where library professionals—both certified and



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classified—fear professional consequences simply for doing their jobs. No educator should risk their job or well-being to ensure students have access to a broad, diverse range of educational materials.

SB 1098 protects our students' right to read. It reduces administrative costs by preventing costly censorship lawsuits. And it supports our educators, ensuring that external pressures do not threaten their jobs or livelihoods.

We urge your support for SB 1098.

Sincerely,

Willis Homann

Oregon School Employees Association

Government Relations Specialist

The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO.

