

Submitter: Meagan Hopkins Looney

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 Meagan Hopkins Looney from Deschutes County, 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, and Indigenous individuals or experiences and to restrict students' access to materials that would allow them to understand the positive contributions of people with historically marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information to both users and facilitators of that information, like librarians and educators. Senate Bill 1098 also ensures students have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities, and selves.

As a Teen Librarian, queer person, and lifelong Oregon resident, I have seen the negative impacts of censoring stories that feature the histories, lived experiences, and everyday lives of queer people. It is vital for young people to be able to see themselves reflected in the media they access, to know that there are people like them, there are people who support them, and that they matter. There is a mental health crisis in Deschutes County, where the leading cause of death among youth ages 10-17 is suicide. Discrimination related to race, ethnicity, gender identity, and/or sexual identity exponentially increases the rate of suicide among those communities. The importance of youth seeing themselves represented positively in the books they read cannot be overstated. Please do not let the political whims of the few risk the lives of Oregon youth by interfering with their right to access information.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story today. I urge you to vote YES to support and advance Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you,
Meagan