

Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I'm writing to urge you to vote YES on SB 1098. I'm a Portland resident who believes deeply in the power of stories to inform, entertain, and empower us all. I'm also a sociologist who has written about the struggle for LGBTQ rights in the United States.

According to the State Library of Oregon, 66% of the materials challenged from 2023-2024 featured 2SLGBTQIA+ characters. These numbers are alarming, but not surprising. Opponents of LGBTQ rights have long claimed that our community is inherently sexual in nature, that LGBTQ stories are equivalent to pornography, and that our very existence threatens the well-being of children.

In 1977, anti-gay activist Anita Bryant mobilized the "Save Our Children" campaign to overturn local civil rights protections in Florida. Campaigners in other states—including Oregon—followed suit, arguing that gay people were a threat to children and the family. Despite major advancements in LGBTQ rights, these same misguided beliefs persist. Today, many challenges to library and educational materials are made on the grounds that LGBTQ stories are obscene, and that exposing young people to stories with LGBTQ representation is therefore developmentally inappropriate. These critics not only smear our community and deny our legitimate place in public life, but ignore the reality that many young people themselves are LGBTQ. Young Oregonians deserve to see themselves represented on the shelves of their local libraries.

Please vote YES on SB 1098. By doing so, you send a strong signal that LGBTQ people, and our stories, are valued in the state of Oregon.