

Submitter: Wendy Gassaway

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

As a parent, teacher, and school librarian, I am proud of Oregon for standing up to book banners. The passing of this law would mean that I as a parent can make decisions for my children instead of someone else preventing them from having free access to literature that might reflect their reality or give them empathy for others. It in no way would prevent other parents from censoring their own children's reading.

Despite hysterical claims to the contrary, I have yet to see pornography in any Oregon school, but I have seen lists of books by and about BiPOC and the LGBTQIA communities challenged again and again by people who are afraid of differences. I also see several disingenuous arguments about kids being forced to read books they feel are inappropriate. This law does not pertain to curriculum decisions, only to classroom and school libraries, where all students can choose what they do or do not want to read. Most Oregonians, as most Americans, are against book banning, but a very vocal, very organized minority has wasted a huge amount of school board and school district time and money by complaining about books that make them personally uncomfortable. This law would free up that time and money for actually educating our kids, while still providing a path for objections that are based on specific concerns, not just attacking every book that acknowledges that different people exist and have different experiences. This law also provides a state-wide framework for how to handle book challenges, so each school and district don't have to develop their own policy, keeping it consistent, predictable, and fair.