

Submitter: Deborah Ferrer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

Dear Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I write today in strong support of SB 1098, the Freedom to Read Act. I hope you will move quickly to bring this bill to the Senate Floor for a vote, then move it on to the House. What could be more important to the success of a society than the Freedom to Read, the freedom to learn about ideas new to us, the freedom to learn about cultures or religions different than our own, the freedom to better understand ourselves by learning about other people like us? There are already more than ample testimonies submitted explaining the many reasons why it is so important that we pass the Freedom to Read Act this year. I won't reiterate them here.

Instead, I'd like to address one of the common "excuses" people have used to oppose this bill – that local school districts and parents should be able to remove materials that are not "age appropriate" from school libraries and curriculum. Some testimonies in opposition suggest that "five-year-olds should not be exposed to sexually explicit material."

These excuses are red herrings. They are dishonest. They are an effort to persuade you to oppose this bill for something that it would not do. SB 1098 prohibits the banning of books based on discrimination for race, national origin, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical or mental disability, military status, or marital or family status. SB 1098 would not prevent school districts from removing books for other reasons, such as age appropriateness.

Vote for SB 1098 for what it will do: It will ensure that a small group of parents with certain ideologies can't ban books about people or groups or history they don't like.

Debi Ferrer
The Dalles, OR