

Submitter: Megan Spencer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

Dear Oregon Senate Committee on Education members,

I am writing in support of SB 1098 as a lifelong reader who believes that public schools work best when they provide a breadth of reading materials that reflects different people and viewpoints. Parents can and should make decisions about what their children read. But that right can't exist for some families and not for others. Public schools, libraries, and educators should provide more access to materials to ensure that families retain choice and control. I believe SB 1098 will help ensure that is so.

In my household growing up, there were many times when my parents had to say no to me. Money could be tight, and while my parents often sacrificed their own options so I had more, there were still things like travel and enrichment that we just couldn't always afford.

What I did have was access to the hundreds of books I brought home with me from school. Not every book I read was a great work of literature, and there were certainly ideas that I didn't agree with. But I wasn't harmed by encountering those ideas. Thinking about ideas is a big part of how education works. I talked to teachers and my parents, I talked to my friends, and I read more books.

These experiences led me to work in a public library and then to seek a master's degree in library science. I do that work today because I believe in the power of reading and choice. I don't think any book is right for every reader. But I know that helping a reader find the book that is right for them is as close to magic as I have ever experienced.

Public education is so hard because it is just that--education for everyone and for all of us. Being a parent is even harder because it matters so very much. But the choices made in a home are not the same as the ones that are made by a school, and they shouldn't be. Every home and family is different. SB 1098 recognizes that difference and requires that public schools provide books for all of our children.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your service to Oregon.

Sincerely, Megan E. Spencer