

Submitter: Lauren Suveges  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

My name is Lauren Suveges, art teacher for Siuslaw School District in Florence, OR. 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 people, Indigenous people and other people of color. In the past five years, book challenges have increased by 231%. This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring freedom of information both to users of that information, as well as providers of that information, for example librarians and educators. It also ensures students have access to accurate and representative information about their histories, communities and selves.

I urge you to vote YES for SB 1098, as Siuslaw School District's School Board is currently considering banning the book *Flamer*, by Mike Curato. At their last board meeting, Siuslaw's School Board also mentioned the possibility of eliminating the District Teacher-Librarian position altogether, which would further limit access to library media resources for our children. *Flamer* is a powerful suicide prevention story about a BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ youth. As an art educator, I know how important it is for our youth to see their stories reflected in the books they read; books also serve as a window into someone else's life, which is extremely important for our rural, geographically isolated students. When books about historically disenfranchised groups – including Black, Indigenous, people of color and LGBTQ+ people – are banned in libraries and schools, this signals that discrimination, exclusion, and othering of youth and students with these identities is acceptable.

Senate Bill 1098 protects student's right to see themselves represented in the books, materials and classrooms they learn from and to learn about diverse communities and people. Thank you for taking the time to hear my story today. We urge you to vote YES to support and advance Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you,