

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee.

My name is Abigail Haffner from Lake Oswego and I am writing to urge you to support SB1098, 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.

As a Cuban American who grew up with very few books that I could see myself in, I believe this issue is incredibly important. My children are growing up in a world where the hero's are brown, the stories are authentically relatable and more often than nought they can find books that talk about hard things that we as a family talk about. I grew up searching for myself in toys, books, movies and so many other spaces and always coming up empty. I currently sub in our schools k-12 and want to share something with you. Recently I was able to share a story called the Two New Years. In it the protagonist is celebrating both Rosh Hashanah and Lunar New Year. At that school they were preparing to recognize and celebrate Lunar New Year as it is an immersion school with a Mandarin strand. This child lit all the way up when I started reading and got excited waving their hands and their face grinning the biggest smile ever. When I called on this child they almost shouted with excitement "That's me! I do that too! I celebrate both in my house! I'm just like the person in the book!!" The chance to see themselves in a book, to see someone else walking the line of two different cultures and experiences helped this child feel seen. Being seen helps children feel safe. In this world we must fight to help children find safety in every place possible. This is why I work in schools and this is one of the reasons I'm writing you today.

SB1098 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. I urge you to vote YES to support and advance SB1098.

Thank you,

Abigail Otaño Haffner