

Submitter:

Veronica Hughes

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB1098

Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,
My name is Veronica Hughes, an elementary school librarian in Portland Public Schools, and 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. topics or individuals and restrict access for students to understand the positive contributions of individuals of marginalized identities who have contributed to our society. 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.

As a librarian in both elementary and middle schools, I have personally seen students blossom when they see books that reflect them. I currently have a student who has had her share of hardships, and it comes out in her behaviors at school. However, she often asks for books about indigenous people, both fiction and nonfiction, and just the existence of that representation seems to ground her, not to mention the education she receives about her own roots and those of other indigenous cultures. In a profession of non-censorship, it's very hard to stomach the idea of keeping books from children based on the jaded prejudices of adults.

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.