

Madi Bourdon

House Committee on Education

RE: Support for SB 1098

Hello and thank you Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the committee,

My name is Madi Bourdon and I am an elementary school counselor from Portland. I am here to urge you to support SB1098. This bill 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 an educator, advisor of an affinity space for LGBTQ2SIA+ students, and Queer person myself, I know how important and life saving it is for our young people to see themselves reflected in the books and materials available to them in schools.

Students of all ages notice when something isn't being talked about, and *also* notice when only certain perspectives and stories are told.

According to the [Trevor Project](#), "LGBTQ youth are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, but rather placed at higher risk because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society." Banning books and materials that reflect the identities of all students signals that certain topics are inappropriate for them to learn about and have access to. That in itself perpetuates the stigmatization our students from marginalized communities are already currently facing.

A lack of open access to affirming and representative material is something I personally experienced growing up, and unfortunately led me to enter the world as a young person completely unaware of diverse perspectives, historical events and individuals that shaped our country, and the ability to build community with those I didn't know at the time were just like me. Without open access to books, and materials in the space I was legally required to attend, I didn't have the opportunity to explore and learn about communities that now reflect parts of my own identity. Unfortunately, the lack of access led me to years of unlearning and relearning to better understand how to move through the world with empathy, care, and an appreciation for perspectives from communities and cultures beyond my own.

Last year, I became a published children's book author writing a book about chosen family - a topic heavily embraced and valued in the Queer community. I chose this topic to provide representation for my students and individuals like me who have found the people who

celebrate us for who we are, and provide us the space to know that we belong. I mention this because after publishing my book, it became more and more clear that many of my book's readers needed the validation that the community, support and love they found in their chosen families was real. I can't tell you how many times grown adults have cried reading my book because they finally had representation of something so deeply a part of their story. I want that opportunity for every student in our state - the opportunity to see a part of them positively reflected. The adults who have read my book didn't have the representation they needed growing up, but the young people we have in schools today can have that right solidified with SB1098. They have the opportunity to know they belong.

Legalized discrimination based on the identity of the individuals featured intensifies the harm towards communities and perspectives who've historically faced erasure in the school setting. As Oregonians, we are stronger than the attempt to be silenced and erased.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my perspective today. We urge you to vote YES to support and advance SB1098.

Thank you,

Madi Bourdon

Portland, OR

Position on Measure: Support