

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the committee.

My name is Katie Pacosa from Happy Valley 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.

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.

For the past four years, I have worked with adolescents in outpatient clinics, residential settings, and K-12 schools across Oregon. If you had asked me four years ago if I would ever work with kids, I would have confidently said no. Even now, I wouldn't call myself a "kid" person. Yet, the time I spent with adolescents aged 10 to 18 has been some of the most rewarding of my life. I may never know where those kids end up, or if my support made a difference, but I do know this: they cannot be safe in a world that doesn't make space for them.

Many of the adolescents I worked with came from diverse and marginalized backgrounds - children from The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, first-generation students from Woodburn, and queer youth who found connection and support through visibility. Despite their different experiences, they shared one powerful commonality: a love of reading. Week after week, they came in with stacks of library books, devouring each one within days. These are the kids in our K-12 education system. These are the future leaders and contributors to Oregon's workforce.

When we restrict access to books that reflect diverse experiences, we are not just censoring stories; we are denying these young people the opportunity to see themselves, to learn about others, and to engage with the world in meaningful ways. Passing this bill ensures that every child in Oregon has the freedom to read, learn, and imagine a future that includes them.

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

Thank you, Katie Pacosa