

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

My name is Doug Martin from Portland, 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.

As someone who works with educators and is involved with organizations working to build a brighter, more inclusive future, I see the value in representation and equal access to stories, histories, and visions for the future as shared in books. I trust librarians, trained and passionate about curating the right, most appropriate books for the children and communities they serve. As a bi/queer man, myself, who came out late in life, I held on to a painful, false identity far too long because I didn't have access to representation or stories that made me feel safe to be who I always was at my core. We voted you in because we believe you represent our core values in this democracy, in our diverse state.

We should all be wary when specific groups have interest to mute or censor stories and histories from other, non-dominant groups. Democracy is in trouble when powers dictate what stories can be told and what identities can be explored. History (as recorded in books) tells us what comes next when censorship and erasure begin. By passing this bill, future generations can have secure, appropriate access to true history, learn about the diverse world, and continue to fall in love with the written medium. Invest in all our children by securing their access to imagination and inclusive education.

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,

Doug Martin