

Skip Dye
Chairman, Intellectual Freedom Task Force
Senior Vice President, Library Sales & Digital Strategy
Penguin Random House
1745 Broadway
New York, NY 10019

April 30, 2025

Representative Courtney Neron
Chair, Oregon House Education Committee
900 Court St. NE, Rm 453
Salem, OR 97301

Members of the Oregon House Education Committee

RE: Support for SB 1098 – Protecting the Freedom to Read in Oregon Public Schools

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

I am writing on behalf of Penguin Random House and the Intellectual Freedom Task Force to express our strong support for Senate Bill 1098, which would prohibit discriminatory book bans and censorship in Oregon's public schools. As the world's largest trade book publisher, we have seen firsthand how efforts to remove books from schools and libraries have escalated into an alarming national crisis, threatening students' rights to learn, explore ideas, and see themselves represented in the books they read.

Oregon is no exception to this trend. The state has seen an unprecedented rise in book challenges, overwhelmingly targeting stories by and about LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, women, and other historically marginalized communities. These attacks on literature are not just about books—they are about the identities, experiences, and histories of students who deserve to be seen, heard, and valued in their classrooms. Banning these books does not protect students; it erases them.

The consequences of censorship are profound. Research consistently shows that access to diverse, representative literature improves student engagement, academic performance, and social-emotional development. Conversely, censorship breeds ignorance, fear, and exclusion. SB 1098 is a necessary safeguard against this growing threat, ensuring that no public school in Oregon can ban books based on the race, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other protected status of the individuals represented in the material.

This bill does not take decision-making power away from educators or parents. Rather, it upholds the foundational principles of intellectual freedom and anti-discrimination laws, reinforcing that public schools must be places of learning, inclusion, and open discourse—not battlegrounds for ideological censorship. It affirms that students in Oregon have the right to read, to think for themselves, and to engage with literature that reflects the full diversity of the world they live in.

The Supreme Court has long recognized that students do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate. Oregon's lawmakers now have the opportunity to reinforce those rights by ensuring that all students have access to diverse and representative literature. The passage of SB

1098 is an important step in upholding the principles of inclusion, education, and intellectual freedom.

At Penguin Random House, we believe in the transformative power of books to inform, inspire, and empower young readers. We urge this committee to take swift action in passing SB 1098 and make it clear that Oregon will not stand for discrimination, censorship, or the suppression of knowledge.

Sincerely,

Skip Dye

Chairman, Intellectual Freedom Task Force
Senior Vice President, Library Sales & Digital Strategy
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