

Julia Lyon
House Committee on Education
RE: Support for SB 1098
4/23/25

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

My name is Julia Lyon and I'm a college student at Willamette University. I am writing to urge you to support SB 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. Book bans across the country primarily ban books featuring LGBTQ+ themes and people of color. This not only breaches people's first amendment rights to freedom of expression, but directly targets youth who identify in such ways. Children will be given the message that their stories and lives are not allowed, not supported, and inferior to their white, cisgender, heterosexual peers. As someone who has had the public school system used to make them feel inferior, I deeply sympathize with these children and wish to prevent that from happening, and urge you to join me in this fight.

As a queer person originally from a state that bans books overzealously (Texas), I have watched the destabilizing effects of book bans on community and culture across the state. Students don't know about people from different backgrounds and have much more trouble empathizing with them. Many don't understand queer culture and identity at all, much less people who come from different racial backgrounds. These students grow into teenagers and adults whose ignorance causes harm to other students. There is a horrific divide between the education levels across districts that ban books and districts that don't. How can we seek community unification and understanding when these book bans contribute to people not seeing their fellow citizens?

Education is about learning. It's about growing your mind, feelings, and soul. Children should have access to the education necessary to understand the world and the people around them. The books that are most often banned are completely harmless and meant to show children perspectives and lifestyles different to their own but equally important. Book bans are a waste of time and resources that make our community's children's worldview smaller. We should be pushing policy that will progress their education, not regress it.

Thank you for your consideration,
Julia Lyon