

Sophie Gelfand
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 Sophie Gelfand from Willamette University in Salem. 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 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.

I believe that now, more than ever, it is crucial that we hold the line when it comes to defending representation and equality. Not only are book bans a disturbing example of governmental censorship, but also complete overreach of the government into personal spheres. It is wildly detrimental and unethical to prioritize a narrow, discriminatory set of beliefs over providing students with opportunities to learn and develop a love for reading through literature designed for children and young adults. I have loved to read my whole life, a passion that has helped me to excel in academic spaces. That love for reading was nurtured by a variety of books on proposed ban lists, from *The Perks of Being A Wallflower* to *And Tango Makes Three*. I was not exposed to harmful material or indoctrinated into a worldview through these books, I was enjoying stories that expanded my thinking and helped me develop a better understanding of literature and the world around me. The right to receive information is protected by the first amendment, and book bans one infringe upon that.

SB 1098 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 SB 1098.

Sophie Gelfand