

Submitter: Olivia Hnilicka

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1098

My name is Olivia Hnilicka from Portland OR 97206, and I urge you to support Senate Bill 1098, the Freedom to Read Act.

Oregon faces unprecedented challenges to school materials, disproportionately targeting books by or about LGBTQIA2S+, Black, Indigenous, and people of color. These bans come when:

49% of Oregon 8th graders experience discrimination weekly, rising to 66% for Indigenous students

Only 47% of LGBTQ+ students in Oregon feel welcome at school

Research confirms students with access to diverse materials show 28% higher critical thinking skills and graduate at higher rates

In 1969, the Supreme Court ruled students don't "shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate." This bill simply ensures those rights are protected from discriminatory censorship while maintaining a transparent review process.

Democracy is undermined when a small minority imposes their preferences by pressuring schools to remove books—in fact, 60% of nationwide book ban attempts were initiated by just 11 individuals.

This bill creates a statewide standard ensuring both students and educators have freedom of information while ensuring young people see themselves represented in materials and learn about diverse communities and perspectives.

The right to free speech protects not just speaking but receiving information. Senate Bill 1098 upholds this fundamental democratic value.

I urge you to vote YES on Senate Bill 1098.

Thank you for your time.