

Freedom to Read: Testimony in Support of SB 1098

Saren Craig

House Committee on Education

RE: Support for SB 1098

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

My name is Saren Craig, and I am from Portland, Oregon. I am writing today on behalf of all students to urge you to support SB 1098, which will prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, ability, country of origin, sexuality, or gender in the educational and library materials available in K-12 public schools in Oregon.

Across the country, we have seen efforts to ban books and materials that feature LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color. These efforts restrict access to stories that help students understand the vital contributions of individuals from historically marginalized communities. SB 1098 establishes a statewide standard that protects freedom of information—not only for the students who rely on it to learn and grow, but also for the educators and librarians who provide it. It ensures that students can access accurate, representative information about their histories, their communities, and themselves.

As a queer person and a mental health therapist, I know firsthand how essential it is for young people to have access to books that reflect LGBTQIA2S+ experiences. Developing language around identity is a crucial part of healthy emotional development. Without access to representative materials, many young people are left isolated, without the words or frameworks to understand themselves. Restricting access to books about LGBTQIA2S+ issues not only harms students' well-being—it also violates the spirit of the First Amendment. Freedom of speech and access to information are foundational rights, and once we start banning books because they include LGBTQIA2S+ people, it sets a dangerous precedent. Religious texts, or any other identities that someone deems controversial, could be next. Censorship does not stop with one group—it expands and threatens the rights of everyone.

SB 1098 protects students' rights to see themselves represented in the materials they engage with and to learn about the diverse communities that make up Oregon and the world.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I urge you to vote YES on SB 1098 and protect every student's freedom to read.