

Good afternoon chair Dembrow, vice-chair Weber and members of the committee-

My name is Lindsay Ray and I'm an educator in Beaverton, Oregon. I'm here today to speak in favor of Senate bill 1583.

As educators, It is our goal and our responsibility to provide places of learning, curiosity, and safety for our students. I've seen students light up because they found a book that had a character with their story or their identity, or because they realized that the history of our country and of our state wasn't simply a story of straight cis white men, but of a variety of people with different cultures and identities continually striving to make a difference.

The power of seeing yourself as a part of our collective history can be so uniquely affirming and for students who have been historically marginalized, it gives them a connection to their learning. For every student and educator, regardless of their identity, having books and instructional materials that celebrate and truly reflect our communities is a gift.

Thinking back to my own experience as a student in rural Texas, I encountered few if any examples of people who shared my identity as a queer woman. The books I had access to were about all white, mostly male protagonists. The history I learned highlighted the heroic efforts of our founding fathers, Civil War generals, heroes at the Alamo, and yes, finally Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I didn't see myself as an active participant in our shared history. I didn't see my experience as a story worth being told. The other students in my class weren't able to see my experience that way, either. When I encounter students today, it's a joy to be able to point them in the direction of something that affirms them so they don't have to wonder about their worth.

Over the past few years, the number of incidents of attempts to ban books in schools has risen sharply across the country, and Oregon is no exception. Senate bill 1583 would ensure that individual parents and school board members are not able to restrict the access of wide swaths of Oregon students to rich learning materials that describe the truth of the tapestry of identities that make up our communities. This bill ensures that students are taught the full truth about our shared history, while still allowing parents to make decisions about their own students' specific reading material.

I encourage you to support Senate bill 1583 to ensure that Oregon students have access to a rich and fulfilling education.