



December 5, 2022

**Statement from the Oregon Library Association and the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee**

**RE: Crook County Library Board Request for Exclusionary Treatment of LGBTQIA+ Library Materials**

This is a joint statement regarding Crook County Library's attempts to restrict access to library materials that focus on LGBTQIA+ issues specifically in the children's collections. This statement comes from the Oregon Library Association (OLA) and the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee (OIFC). The Oregon Library Association (OLA) is a professional organization of Oregon library workers and includes the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee. The OIFC provides expertise and support for intellectual freedom issues on behalf of the Oregon Library Association and is the professional committee with the charges to support intellectual freedom and to respond to censorship. The OLA in combination with OIFC supports Oregon school and public libraries in managing challenges to materials within their library collections.

Over the course of the past year, libraries across Oregon have received a number of both formal and informal complaints regarding the materials within their collections. Specific to Crook County Library, the request has been made to remove LGBTQIA+ materials from the children's section and instead shelve them separately, away from the rest of the kid's collection. The request also includes labeling materials visually, as an indicator of LGBTQIA+ content.

It is the OIFC's understanding that the impetus behind these challenges is a special-interest political agenda that seeks increased control over the ideas and information available to children, particularly in the library setting. We recognize this effort as part of a nationally-coordinated campaign that threatens the core American values and First Amendment rights of free expression and free access to ideas by muting the voices of historically marginalized groups, just as these communities are finally gaining fair representation in library collections.

The request to relocate and re-label the LGBTQIA+ materials at Crook County Library has occurred outside of established library policies and/or legal processes for filing a complaint

regarding library materials. Instead the complainant has used aggression tactics including social media campaigns designed to mobilize support for censorship rather than sensitivity and critical thought, attending board meetings with the intent of aggressively requesting immediate action regarding library materials, and personally attacking the individual librarians and Library Director. The complainant and Board, through these events, have further questioned the authority, education and experience of the library staff, hired to build balanced and valuable library collections that represent the community they serve. The OIFC would like to point out that librarianship is a profession which requires a master's level degree, highly specialized training and education, plus admission to the professional association which governs the work. Just like doctors or lawyers have education expectations, and guiding principles that govern their work, so does librarianship. To question the librarians hired to manage the services and roles of the library, would be to question the value of libraries themselves. The OIFC condemns the use of these and any other intimidation and extralegal means aimed at censorship which are antithetical to ALA's [Freedom to Read statements](#), First Amendment rights of users, and the library profession.

It is important to point out that the relocation of library materials as well as the implementation of a labeling system is contradictory to the Library Bill of Rights and the First Amendment rights of library users. Specifically, the ALA provides these interpretations on the situation for review: [Access to Library Resources for Minors](#), [Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#), [Labeling Systems](#), [Restricted Access to Library Materials](#) :

"Viewpoint-neutral directional labels are a convenience designed to save time. These are different in intent from attempts to prejudice, discourage, or encourage users to access particular library resources or to restrict access to library resources. Labeling as an attempt to prejudice attitudes is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library resources."

"The American Library Association supports equal and equitable access to all library resources and services by users of all ages. Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users is in violation of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users"

"Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. A library's failure to acquire materials on the grounds that minors may be able to access those materials diminishes the credibility of the library in the community and restricts access for all library users."

"Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states that "Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation." The Association

affirms that books and other materials coming from presses that specialize in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender subject matter; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender authors or other creators; and materials regardless of format or services dealing with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender life are protected by the Library Bill of Rights. Librarians are obligated by the Library Bill of Rights to endeavor to select materials without regard to the sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation of their creators by using the criteria identified in their written, approved selection policies.”

“A primary goal of the library profession is to facilitate access to all points of view on current and historical issues. All proposals for restricted access should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that the purpose is not to suppress a viewpoint or to place a barrier between users and content. Libraries must maintain policies and procedures that serve the diverse needs of their users and protect the First Amendment right to receive information.”

While we recognize the role of parents and the choices they make for their children, that right exists on an individual basis. The OIFC does not support the idea of blanket barriers imposed by government or library officials that are applied to all readers. In that light, these titles are a part of general use within the library collection, for which readers are able to make optional and freely available reading choices over the consumption of this material. Should a parent, guardian or caregiver choose to institute individual doctrines over the consumption of this material for their minor children, that is their choice, as is the choice of others to freely utilize this and any other materials of interest and importance to them.

We encourage our libraries and our public to not turn away from the controversy of a challenge, but instead accept different voices and perspectives as a foundation to your First Amendment right to information. It is our belief, and a shared belief, that all Americans, regardless of age, have a right to learn and grow through the use of information without the infringement of politics or laws preventing our access to information. This right does not dissolve within certain locations (such as schools or libraries) but instead is innate in our humanness and should be embraced as a respected freedom for all.

The mere presence of a book in a library does not indicate endorsement of the contents by the library or approval of the ideas presented. Libraries have a duty, as publicly funded agencies, to provide resources that ensure equitable service and representation of the diverse groups and perspectives of their community. That duty involves including LGBTQIA+ stories, because they are tax-paying human beings, our friends and neighbors, fellow Americans, and an invaluable part of our communities. As explained in the ALA’s [EDI Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#), “All community members will feel truly welcomed and included when they see themselves reflected in collections that speak to their cultures and life experiences... Socially excluded, marginalized, and underrepresented people, not just the mainstream majority, should be able to see themselves reflected in the resources and programs that libraries offer.”

Libraries have a core responsibility to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and to stand up against censorship, regardless of the age, background, race, gender or any other characteristic of the reader and the OIFC supports our school and public library efforts to protect these freedoms. OLA and OIFC reaffirm the [ALA Statement on Book Censorship](#) and support all Oregon libraries in their efforts to protect materials from censorship, especially the voices of the oppressed.

In sum, the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee supports parents' involvement and guidance in media selections for their own children, but we stand firmly behind our [Library Bill of Rights](#) and the Freedom to Read statements and against parental overreach actions which violate the First Amendment rights and dignity of others.

The OIFC supports all readers, regardless of age, background, gender, or race the undeniable right to information with a full range of ideas, opinions, concepts, topics and thoughts. Of course not every book is right for every reader, but the right of every reader to read what they choose must be honored.

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OIFC Chair 2022-2023

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