

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 6/17/2026

MEDIA CONTACT: Beth Gawne, (425) 312-4201 bethg@council2.com

Timberland Library Workers Union Reaffirms Support for Intellectual Freedom and LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Public Libraries

TUMWATER, WA — AFSCME Council 2 Local 3758-B, the union representing most Timberland Regional Library (TRL) workers, denounces the list of “desired outcomes” for TRL written by Board of Trustees President Brian Mittge and the harmful views it expresses.

As library workers, we are committed to protecting First Amendment rights and upholding core library values of intellectual freedom—the principle, as defined by the American Library Association, that “every person has the right to access information from all points of view, in all formats, and without restriction.” The fundamental purpose of public libraries is to provide access to information, ideas, and stories that represent the diverse needs and experiences of its community. We oppose any proposals that would restrict or remove access to books and materials based on the identities they represent.

Library workers are dedicated to ensuring the safety of young patrons. We encourage caregivers to be active participants as their children make choices about accessing library materials and activities. We uphold policies and guidelines regarding unattended children, teen spaces and internet use that are made to protect young people in our libraries. We present early learning storytimes that empower children and families with information about health, bodily autonomy, consent, identity, and more. Attempts to stigmatize and restrict information and services poses a tremendous risk to children’s safety and well-being. Libraries are critical resources for building safety into our communities. Free access to information keeps us safe.

Public libraries are for everyone, including the most marginalized communities: those who are LGBTQIA+, unhoused, poor, disabled, young, immigrant, and Black and Indigenous people of color. Given the historic and ongoing discrimination targeting these populations, particularly the LGBTQIA+ community, we believe that library workers’ commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is essential. These community members are often the most dedicated library supporters, and we have a responsibility to provide a safe space for them and everyone else.

At a time when TRL is working to rebuild from significant financial challenges, we continue to advocate for a strong, well-funded public library system. Efforts to restrict access to materials and undermine principles of intellectual freedom moves us in the wrong direction. Now it is more important than ever to secure increased funding through a levy lid lift, so that libraries across the five county district can continue to offer free access to affirming and often life-saving information and resources for all.

We urge the TRL Board of Trustees to denounce the exclusion of our most marginalized community members and support a levy lid lift to reaffirm their commitment to protecting intellectual freedom, equitable access to information, and public libraries that serve everyone.

###