

March 30, 2015

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St., NE
Salem, OR 97301
RE: Support for SB 849



Dear Chair Prozanski and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 849. This important legislation is necessary to ensure the viability of Oregon's snow recreation industry. Clackamas County, and Central, Eastern and Southern Oregon each depend on snow sports as an economic engine. I have the privilege of serving as Executive Director of Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory (OMHT); Clackamas County's destination marketing organization (DMO). We are responsible for tourism promotion and development within the county. Our operating revenues come from a voter approved, countywide 6 percent transient room tax (TRT), and we are guided by the Tourism Development Council (TDC). It is on behalf of the TDC that I urge your support of SB 849.

As our name suggests, Mt. Hood factors prominently into our visitor attractiveness. Skiing and other snow sports are a major driver of tourism activity on the mountain and in surrounding communities. Timberline boasts the longest ski season in North America, while Skibowl offers more night skiing than any other resort in the country. The mountain's proximity to a major metropolitan area and international airport, paired with the recreational activities contribute immensely to the economic vitality of our region and the entire State.

These impacts are clearly measurable in our region. Our TRT is collected monthly by lodging type and zone. The TRT zones are organized by the areas of: 1.) Mt. Hood, 2.) I-205, 3.) I-5; and 4.) Rural. The Mt. Hood Zone generally performs well year round but usually lags behind both the I-205 and I-5 Zones with the exception of the winter months: December, January, and February. In winter, the Mt. Hood Zone propels into first place as the top TRT earner. This discernable shift in revenue patterns means that snow related tourism is critical to the livability of many rural communities on the mountain and throughout Oregon.

The bottom line is that winter recreation and most outdoor recreation come with their own set of inherent risks. It is the common sense understanding of doing winter sport (or any other): just by doing it at all can lead to injury or even death. The conditions that arise such as in the natural environment (trees, rocks, cliffs, water, cold, etc.) can be difficult to avoid or prepare for. Sometimes a participant's underestimation of the conditions or overestimation of their ability to deal with the conditions at hand are the issue. Then there are those times that most attribute to Mother Nature or bad luck. This approach to risk has enabled Oregon to grow and prosper through its recreational industries, including other key recreational apparel, shoes, and equipment (think NIKE, Columbia Sportswear or Addias) industries.

We recognize the need for a balanced approach to recreational liability concerns. Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory believes that SB 849 provides that balance of common sense and true liability.

Sincerely,

Danielle Cowan

Danielle Cowan, Executive Director
Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory