

February 3, 2021

Representative Evans
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management
900 Court St., NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2593 Support, Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue Cards

Chair Evans, Vice-Chair Lewis, Vice-Chair Meek & Members of the Committee:

Travel Oregon's vision is a better life for all Oregonians through strong, sustainable local communities that welcome a diversity of explorers. This includes enhancing economies throughout the state by helping communities better leverage the state's multi-billion tourism industry. It also means working together with partners, such as Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and Oregon State Sheriffs' Association (OSSA) to ensure we all work together to help ensure the safety of visitors and Oregonians alike through clear and targeted messaging around responsible recreation. As such, Travel Oregon supports the creation of an outdoor recreation search and rescue card program through HB 2593, that generates additional revenue for search and rescue organizations and county sheriff offices.

Many visitors travel to the state with plans to recreate in Oregon's diverse and scenic outdoors. In fact, according to a 2017 study, of the 26.4 million overnight visitors to Oregon, 33% (nearly 9 million) participated in some form of outdoor recreation during their visit. Travel Oregon works to drive overnight stays in Oregon. But it is crucial that visitors and Oregonians have a safe and responsible experience when they venture outdoors. In 2020, Travel Oregon launched the Take Care Out There (TCOT) campaign, encouraging recreationists to follow simple suggestions like packing the Ten Essentials, having back up plans, maps, and water, and always letting someone know where you're going before you set out to enjoy the outdoors. Both OEM and OSSA participated in reviewing TCOT messaging to ensure alignment.

This past spring and summer, Oregon saw an increase of outdoor recreation activity statewide. As the COVID-19 pandemic restricted events, business operations and international travel, visitors and locals flocked to the outdoors. To support public land management agencies due to this increased usage, Travel Oregon partnered with these agencies to increase responsible recreation messaging statewide with targeted efforts around overcrowding and trash management. The agency also launched targeted social media posts that clearly defined visitor regulations at both Crater Lake and the North Coast.

Yet, we know that even with the best messaging in place, outdoor adventures sometimes go awry. In these instances, it is crucial to have well-supported, and easily accessible search and rescue efforts available to visitors and locals. As the search and rescue card is developed, Travel Oregon will continue to partner with public land management agencies, as well as OEM and OSSA, on promoting responsible recreation. The agency is also committed to working with both OEM and OSSA to promote the card, encouraging those who recreate in Oregon to purchase it to support search and rescue efforts. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Todd Davidson
CEO, Travel Oregon