



ROSE CITY ROWING CLUB

To: House Committee On Judiciary
From: Nick Haley, Rose City Rowing Club
Date: Jan. 30, 2023

RE: HB3006

I offer testimony with the goal to request an exemption for youth rowers.

As a rowing coach for teenagers, my primary purpose is to keep the people I coach safe. I believe requiring rowers to wear a pdf will put them at greater risk than they are at without one on.

- The rowing motion involves moving parts, not least of which is an oar, which is repeatedly brought in close proximity to the torso. In the event of a capsize, it is likely that a pdf (standard or inflatable) will complicate a rower's extraction from the boat, as it will almost certainly get tangled with the oar or caught under a boat rigger. Rowing shells are designed with features that allow an athlete to free themselves of the boat as easily as possible in the event of capsize, so they don't get trapped underneath an overturned shell. Once free, athletes can hold onto the boat. They are full of built-in floatation and are easy to grab onto.
- Standard life jackets are bulky enough to prohibit the rowing motion. Mandating that rowers wear them will effectively prohibit them from performing the rowing motion correctly.
- Organized rowing programs are equipped with safety launches that contain lifejackets for the athletes. Rowing practices are closely supervised and the safety record for youth rowing programs nationwide is excellent.

It is for these reasons that rowers are exempted nationwide from wearing PFDs while rowing, according to federal Coast Guard regulations.

Requiring youth rowers to wear a PFD while rowing will create more dangerous situations, will significantly impact the rowing experience and will endanger the sport, clubs and youth programs in our state. It will be impossible to teach them how to row correctly and it will be impossible for them to race effectively. While I applaud any initiatives to increase water safety, I do not believe that mandating that rowers wear PFD's will achieve a safer overall experience or environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nick Haley
Program Leader, Rose City Rowing Club
Team Manager, United States National Team