

Submitted online

January 31, 2023

To: House Committee on the Judiciary
From: Becky Steckler, Portland, OR 97202

RE: HB 3006 - Exemption for rowers

Dear Chair Kropf and members of the House Committee on the Judiciary,

I am a former rower and my 15 year old son currently rows for Oregon Rowing Unlimited youth rowing club in Portland. I'm writing to ask the Committee to include an exemption in HB 3006 to allow children 16 and under to row without a personal floatation device, when supervised by an adult in a boat with additional flotation devices.

Youth rowing clubs regularly include children under the age of 16 and have instituted a number of measures to ensure the safety of our children. These children are always accompanied by adults in motorized launches (boats) that have additional floatation devices. Children are required to pass a swim test before they are allowed in the boats. Rowing is best in calm water and coaches take the children off the water if the conditions are too rough or dangerous for any reason. To my knowledge, there has never been an incident related to safety since my son began rowing two years ago and I am unaware of any safety issues before he began to row.

This rule, without an exemption for rowing, would put Oregon youth rowers at a significant disadvantage on the regional and national stage. Rowing youth compete in several age groups including U17, U16, U15. Wearing PFDs impacts mastery of efficient sculling technique; kids in other states would not be similarly burdened. Last year at Youth Nationals ORU rowers placed in several categories. These results would not be possible under the proposed rule.

Regattas and training camps in Oregon could also place rowing youth from other states at a safety risk, as these kids are not used to rowing with PFDs, and their oars could get caught in their PFDs, putting them at risk. In fact, it's unlikely that teams from out of state would compete in Oregon because of the requirements currently in this bill.

Thank you for considering an exemption for youth rowers from the requirement to wear PFDs in this bill.

Thank you,

Becky Steckler