



February 15, 2023

Senate Committee on Judiciary
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 754 Recreational Liability Reform

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Visit Central Oregon, it is a pleasure to provide a letter of support for SB 0754. Visit Central Oregon's vision is to foster an enduring economy for Central Oregon through a thriving tourism industry. A critical piece of this work is ensuring that Central Oregon's scenic outdoor spaces and boundless recreation opportunities remain accessible for all.

Outdoor recreation is a significant contributor to the region's economy. A 2019 study found that local recreationists and visitors spent more than \$1 billion in Central Oregon – on everything from guided trips, to gear and equipment and more. This spending supported almost 13,000 full- and part-time jobs, \$484 million in wages and other compensation and roughly \$560 million in GDP contributions.

Over the last few years, Oregon's outdoors have seen exponential growth in the number of recreationists – especially during spikes in Covid cases – as the outdoors are perceived as a safer option than gathering indoors. Many of the businesses (local guides, outfitters, tour operators) negatively impacted by Oregon's current liability laws promote Leave No Trace principles, help teach fire safety and wildfire awareness, and ensure recreationists are prepared with proper gear for a safe and enjoyable experience. Without these businesses, the number of people interested in recreating in the outdoors would continue to increase, but they would venture out unprepared, putting themselves and others at risk.

Without state-enforced liability waivers outdoor recreation businesses often have no choice but to increase consumer costs and in some cases scale back operations to cover rising insurance premiums – causing not only a major threat to the local economy but also removing the easy access to Oregon's outdoors that is fundamental to generating tourism activity.

Supporting SB 0754, adopts liability waiver enforcement that mirrors other western states, provides balanced protection for businesses that are integral to the state's economy, and helps keep the outdoors safe, sustainable and accessible for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Julia Theisen
President/CEO