



February 12, 2024

Support for -3 Recreational Immunity Fix Amendment to SB 1576

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee:

I am a trails professional who has been hiking long-distance trails for over 20 years and has been active in supporting, building, and establishing trails for more than a decade. I hike to find solace, fuel my creativity, and deepen my connection with the natural world. I started my consulting company to help long-distance trail organizations improve the hiking experience and inspire action on behalf of the environment.

Most recently I have been working to establish the Oregon Desert Trail, a 750-mile hiking route in southeastern Oregon for the conservation organization, Oregon Natural Desert Association. The Oregon Desert Trail is one of 15 recognized Oregon Signature Trails, and I have the privilege of helping hikers understand how to safely traverse the stunning and remote landscapes of this often unknown corner of the state. When I hiked the trail in 2016 I had incredible experiences like watching a large herd of bighorn sheep gallop to the edge of Diablo Rim, traversing almost 200 miles of the incredibly beautiful and challenging Owyhee Canyon, and dropping 5,000 feet from the top of Steens Mountain to the vast expanse of the Alvord playa below.

I want to see a fix to Oregon's Recreational Immunity law this session so trails like this can continue to provide opportunities for awe, wonder, and exploration. Trails of all lengths and difficulty across the state showcase our natural wonders and help people connect to the diverse landscapes that make Oregon an incredible home and destination.

Please pass SB 1576-3 with language that clearly restores recreational immunity for public and private landowners and clearly applies to both improved and unimproved trails.

Beyond my professional work, I regularly recreate around the state on lands managed by various entities and experience first-hand the importance of recreational immunity. This law encourages landowners to open lands to the public for recreational use by protecting the landowner if a recreational user seeks damages after an injury. Ensuring that our public land owners, parks providers, and private land owners have liability protection when I, and the public, engage in recreation on these lands is vitally important to the extensive system of trails we have in Oregon.

This bill provides a critical emergency fix, and I'm also eager to see a permanent fix to provide landowners with the assurance they need to plan for future recreation access.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Renee Patrick
Long-Distance Trail Consultant