



February 12, 2024

Oregon Legislature – Senate Committee on Judiciary:

The Travel Lane County board of directors is a 30-member board representing the interests of the hospitality industry in Lane County. In 2023, the board voted to support Senate Bill 754 because it believes that aligning Oregon with other western states levels the playing field while continuing to provide individuals protection from grossly negligent behavior on the part of businesses. We appreciate the work of the Senate Committee on Judiciary to develop a short-term fix through SB1576 and we fully support a long-term solution that allows Oregon's outdoor economy to thrive.

You are well-aware that outdoor recreation plays a significant role in our 4,700 square miles of beautiful landscapes and throughout the rest of Oregon. The ability of our local businesses, outdoor groups and non-profits to provide recreation and fitness opportunities to residents and visitors is threatened by Oregon's current liability waiver standard.

Travel Lane County supports businesses like ski resorts, gyms, guides and outfitters, and many more who operate in the outdoor recreation sphere and beyond. Additionally, activities such as high school sports may also be affected by the out-of-balance nature of the current requirements.

Recent court rulings have effectively nullified Oregon liability waivers, impacting the accessibility and affordability of recreation and fitness for people across our state. Oregon businesses now pay significantly more for liability insurance than other western states. As a result, recreation and fitness providers are forced to either increase consumer costs or eliminate recreation options. This will have a devastating effect on small businesses, rural communities and recreationists throughout the state. Without waiver reform, Oregon risks losing the tremendous societal and economic benefits recreation and fitness provide.

Our region hosts a large number of cycling, running, trail and sports events that require liability waivers to be signed by participants. The potential for an event not occurring increases as event expenses rise or the liability risk becomes too high for the event organizer. It would be difficult to quantify the potential number of lost room nights at this



time, however, visitor experience is affected when outdoor recreation opportunities become less available or are priced so high that they become inaccessible. Should there be fewer opportunities for visitors to consider, extending a stay becomes less likely.

Our small businesses face enormous economic and, for some, environmental challenges. Having a reasonable standard for liability waivers creates a more level playing field for Oregon businesses while continuing to protect visitors from gross negligence on the part of operators who don't have the best interest of their customers as a top priority.

Travel Lane County supports and encourages the passage of Senate Bill 1576. Thank you for your commitment to Lane County and your service to Oregon.

Andy Vobora
Vice President of Stakeholder Relations
Travel Lane County