



February 14, 2024

Reference: Support for-3 Recreational Immunity Fix Amendment to SB 1576

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

My name is Tori Middelstadt. I am the Executive Director of Visit Grants Pass. We are the destination organization for Grants Pass and Josephine County, funded by the local transient lodging tax. Visit Grants Pass would like to ask members of the committee 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.

Visit Grants Pass works to invite visitors into Grants Pass and Josephine County to leave positive economic impact in the community. We believe the visitor industry is an import part of the local economic engine as this area continues to replace the economic loss of logging. Our biggest visitor driver is our outdoor experiences like the Wild and Scenic Rogue River, Oregon Caves National Monument and our year-round hiking and biking trails.

We work closely with our county parks, who reached to me about their concern of the loss of recreational immunity. Their insurance company's advice was to close ALL trails on county park land. For the livability or our locals, and interest of our visitors, we cannot allow the loss of recreational immunity to remain. Without the passing SB 1576-3, our local, state and federal land managers are considering closing our public improved and unimproved trails.

Recreating in constantly changing outdoor environments also carries possible risk of injury. Without recreational immunity, landowners fear the real risk of expensive lawsuits and cannot afford to keep their trails and lands open to the public. They are especially concerned about increased liability of making trail improvements like bridges, railings, and boardwalks, even though such construction both can better protect sensitive habitat and make trails recreation destinations like beaches, rivers, etc more accessible to all ages and abilities.

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

It's the 165th Anniversary of the founding of Oregon— a perfect day to protect outdoor recreation and keep our public lands for the people. Thank you for hearing our concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tori Middelstadt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tori Middelstadt
Visit Grants Pass
Executive Director