



Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Judiciary
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

February 28, 2024

RE: Support for Senate Bill 1576, Relating to Civil Matters

Dear Chair Jason Kropf, Vice-Chairs Tom Andersen and Kim Wallan, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the more than 74,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, we are writing in support of SB 1576.

The mission statement of the Sierra Club begins with the statement “To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth.” Leading hikes and outings is fundamental to our work. We treasure the beauty of Oregon’s scenic places and appreciate the health benefits and joy of recreating with friends. We develop a deeper relationship to the land when we have a personal connection to it. For these reasons and many more, we urge you to vote in favor of SB 1576, Relating to Civil Matters.

Oregon property law protects landowners who allow free (or low cost) public, recreational use of their property. This bill closes some loopholes that have caused some municipalities and individuals to close access to their property for fear of liability. SB 1576 attempts to add more protections for landowners by adding bicycling, walking and running to the list of recreational activities that might occur on the property of a landowner who has granted public access.

Additionally, the bill proposes to explain the legal implications for maintaining or not maintaining the trails, waterways, and roads which the public uses to access landowner’s property. Even if a member of the public is injured on an unmaintained or unimproved trail, waterway, or road while accessing the landowner’s property, the landowner is not liable for injuries that occur on those points of access. (Section 7(1)(c)(A), pg. 6, lines 39-45).



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If the trail, waterway, or road is maintained or improved to allow public access, the landowner is still not liable for injuries that occur. However, if the injury was a result of the trail/road/waterway maintained in such a way that showed blatant disregard for an abnormally dangerous feature or for a dangerous activity, then the landowner is no longer immune from liability. (Section 7(1)(c)(B)(ii), page 7, lines 4-8).

In order for the public to continue enjoying the beauty that is Oregon, we urge your support for SB 1576.

Respectfully submitted,

Damon Motz-Storey, Chapter Director
Sierra Club Oregon Chapter