

To: Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee.
From: Kathleen Walker, City of Sandy Mayor
Date: February 17, 2025
Re: Support of SB 179 Making Recreational Immunity Permanent

I am writing in support of SB 179. Sandy has numerous parks and trails and is building more trails. Sandy is adjacent to regional trails like the Springwater, Sandy Ridge Mountain Bike Area, and trails on the Mt. Hood National Forest. A major part of our city's economic development is centered on tourism and recreational opportunities in our area.

It is critical "Recreational Immunity" be made permanent to how we manage free use in our parks and on our trails. Access to nature and outdoor recreation provides so many benefits to individuals and communities. However, 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.

My career before retirement was managing, building and maintaining the 500+ miles of hike, bike, horse, OHV, Nordic ski, snowmobile and snowshoe trails on the west side of the Mt. Hood National Forest. I know how devastating Mother Nature can be during wind, flood and fire events on trails. It is not realistic to timely sign hazards on a trail and hazards vary based on the individual's skills. SB 179 will ensure that all public parks and trails can be used without charge.

There are three minor additions that should be made to SB 179:

- 1) Extend the increased level of immunity in Section 1 of the bill to private landowners who open their land to the public free of charge.
- 2) Clarify more strongly that trails that serve dual purpose as both recreation and transportation facilities are covered under the law; to address the problem of subjective intent.
- 3) Include broader language like "conveyance" rather than the specific trail activities like walking, biking, and running currently spelled out in the "includes but is not limited to" recreational activities list.

Your passage of an amended SB 179 will give Oregonians and visitors to our great state, a lasting legislative fix to recreational immunity and allow these treasures to remain free for use. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

Kind Regards,



Kathleen Walker
City of Sandy Mayor