

To: Dear Chair Nguyen, Vice Chairs Dielh and Isadore, and Members of the Committee  
From: Kathleen Walker, City of Sandy Mayor  
Date: February 17, 2025  
Re: Support of HB 3140 to study and change recreational waiver liability.

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I am writing in support of HB 3140. Sandy has numerous great parks and trails. We sponsor bike and running races, and other recreational events. We have outfitter-guide partners that operate summer camps and other recreational activities through our Sandy Community Center. They include mountain bike riding, climbing, and other outdoor activities. We conduct volunteer park and trail maintenance activities. All these activities require the city and independent instructors to carry insurance. All activities also require the participants to sign a waiver releasing the City of Sandy from liability if they are injured. A major part of our city's economic development is centered on tourism and recreational opportunities in our area and these events are a large part of that, as they bring visitors to our small town.

Oregon has outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation but in constantly changing outdoor environments, that also carries possible risk of injury. While event managers and instructors are responsible for giving participants safety training and make them aware of any risks, these activities involve rugged activities in a natural setting, where forces of nature are present. Oregon should follow the waiver policies of other western states that benefit from outfitter guides, instructors, community center training opportunities, competitive events, and volunteer work parties.

We agree that insurance and a duty of care is needed for these activities, but participants must be willing to accept some liability for their actions. The whole point of having outfitter-guided activities and organized events is so that families and individuals can learn and practice new skills in a relatively safe setting. When liability insurance becomes prohibitively expensive, these businesses and local community events and activities will stop. These activities are much less safe when undertaken by inexperienced folks on their own.

I managed recreation and trails on the west side of the Mt. Hood National Forest for 25 years. Our permitted outfitter-guides played a critical role for those climbing Mt. Hood, backpacking, and white-water rafting on the Clackamas River preventing innumerable search and rescues. We had 900 volunteers a year on trail maintenance projects in the rugged back country. The waivers all these participants signed, acknowledged the risks involved. As land managers, we were diligent in ensuring outfitters or work parties had qualified leaders and robust safety and communication plans and gear, documented in their operations plans. Colorado, Washington and Idaho can all provide your staff with example legislation to address this important issue.

Our liability insurance requirements must remain affordable so our recreation events, outfitter-guides and volunteer work parties that rely on waivers, can continue to operate and be affordable for all. I support HB 3140 to quickly evaluate and duplicate our neighbor western states' policies on liability and waivers. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

Kind Regards,



Kathleen Walker  
City of Sandy Mayor