



## **SB 179: Support Recreational Immunity to Keep Trails Open**

**Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee:**

On behalf of the Oregon Coast Visitors Association – the Regional Destination Management Organization contracted with Travel Oregon to be the tourism stewards of the entire Oregon coast – I am writing today to urge passage of SB 179.

Public access to our natural recreational wonders is a cornerstone of Oregon’s history. From our open public beaches to our state parks and natural areas, we are leaders in allowing the public to experience our state’s wonders. This bill, though not a perfect solution from our perspective, is a compromise that will keep trails around our state – including on the Oregon Coast – open for public use.

Public access to recreational opportunities is critical to our tourism economy on the Oregon Coast. In many or most coastal communities, tourism is the primary economic driver, supporting 25,000 jobs on the coast and garnering \$2.3 billion in visitor spending to our communities. Court cases threatened to remove a large tourism draw in the Oregon Coast Trail. This will keep the trail open through public lands. We applaud this aspect of the bill.

That said, there are portions of the Oregon Coast Trail, as well as surely others around the state, that traverse private properties. We would encourage a future look at expanding this immunity in some way to appropriate landowners so that we can continue pursuing a complete trail running the entirety of our coastline. This bill also does not address exactly the heart of the matter, which is the intent of the user when utilizing a trail – whether for recreation or transportation.

Given those caveats, the Oregon Coast Visitors Association supports this bill fully and urges you to move passage so that it can continue in the Legislative process. We believe this is a great step in keeping our trails open and available for recreation on the Oregon Coast.

Sincerely,

Marcus Hinz, Executive Director

Oregon Coast Visitors Association