



February 19, 2025

SB 179: Support Recreational Immunity to Keep Trails Open

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

On behalf of the Coos Bay North Bend Charleston Visitor and Convention Bureau – the local Destination Management Organization for Oregon’s Bay Area on the South Coast – I am writing today to urge passage of SB 179.

In 1913 Governor Oswald West designated all of Oregon’s beaches as belonging to the public. We have a long and glorious history in this state of ensuring everyone has an opportunity to enjoy our region’s scenic wonders. But without the protection that recreational immunity provides, landowners have no incentive or, in fact, good reason, to keep their properties open to public access.

SB 179 can restore that faith by allowing public entities to keep lands open for recreational uses. This same language in a prior bill was what allowed our trails to stay open in the wake of the Fields v. Newport case. Removing the sunset and making these provisions permanent will accomplish that goal, and we fully support that.

To be honest, we don’t think this bill goes far enough. We would like to see these protections extend to private landowners who open access for hiking and other activities. We’d also like to see the core issue of the Fields v. Newport case – the intent of the user when they access recreational facilities – addressed. This bill is a good compromise that will keep access to public lands open, so that residents and visitors alike can take in the scenic wonder that is the South Coast.

This legislation still allows legal remedies in cases of negligence or intentional disregard to safety. It’s a good compromise that still keeps the trails open for use. We urge you to pass SB 179.

All the best,

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