



February 19, 2025

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 179. As a conservation organization and land trust holding over 1,500 acres in the Columbia River Gorge—with two public preserves—we recognize the critical role of recreational immunity in keeping trails open and accessible.

For over 40 years, Friends of the Columbia Gorge has worked to protect the Gorge's scenic, cultural, and natural resources. Our *Gorge Towns to Trails* initiative, launched in 2011, envisions a 200-mile network connecting communities via public and private lands, providing economic, environmental, and recreational benefits. Strong liability protections are essential to this effort.

We appreciate the progress made in ensuring permanent recreational immunity protections and support SB 179's passage. However, we encourage future refinements, including:

- Extending immunity to private landowners who open their land to the public for free.
- Clarifying that trails serving both recreation and transportation are protected.
- Using broader language like "conveyance" instead of listing specific activities.

While SB 179 doesn't fully address these concerns, we support its passage and remain committed to working with legislators, landowners, and advocates to strengthen protections. Ensuring strong recreational immunity laws is vital to keeping Oregon's trails open for generations.

Thank you for your time and dedication to outdoor recreation in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Renee Tkach
Conservation Director