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**House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade**  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Subject: Support for HB 3140 – Upholding Liability Waivers in Outdoor Recreation**

Dear Chair Daniel Nguyen, Vice-Chair Ed Diehl, Vice-Chair Shannon Isadore, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of **HB 3140**, which ensures liability waivers remain a tool for recreation providers and stewardship organizations. I'm also hoping to provide a perspective of recreation and consideration of this bill through the lens of public stewardship. **In no way, does Willamette Riverkeeper (WRK) or Oakridge Trails Alliance (OTA) support protection of gross negligence.** However, we do believe that liability waivers help participants understand the **inherent risks** of outdoor activities, ensuring they can make informed decisions while enabling organizations like ours to continue serving the public.

WRK is dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Willamette River, engaging thousands of volunteers annually in activities such as removing debris, restoring riparian zones, and managing invasive species. These efforts not only enhance water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife but also ensure a safer environment for recreational users. OTA focuses on maintaining over 380 miles of trails in Oakridge, a critical component of our local tourism economy. Our volunteers contribute service hours valued at hundreds of thousands of dollars each year, directly supporting Oregon's recreation infrastructure where public resources are limited.

Oakridge, in particular, depends on outdoor recreation as the primary economic driver for local businesses, from guiding services to hospitality and retail. The ability to maintain and expand trail networks is essential to sustaining the region's economy. Given recent federal budget cuts, volunteer stewardship is more critical than ever to ensure accessibility and safety for tourists enjoying these trails. These organizations have also played a key role in recovering trails and other recreational resources devastated by wildfires and heavy precipitation events, which have increasingly impacted the region. Without liability waivers, the increased cost and legal uncertainty will discourage the very programs that ensure these trails remain viable for recreation and tourism. The cost of insurance for nonprofits and community service organizations is already prohibitively high, placing an undue financial burden on entities that exist to serve the public good. Additional legal risk could force many of these programs to shut down entirely, eliminating jobs, reducing tourism revenue, and harming the local economy.

Liability waivers are essential in these endeavors. They educate participants about the inherent risks associated with outdoor activities, promoting informed decision-making and personal responsibility. Without the legal assurance provided by waivers, organizations like ours would face increased liability exposure, potentially limiting volunteer engagement and the continuation of programs vital to environmental stewardship and community well-being.

I urge the committee to support HB 3140 to maintain the balance between facilitating outdoor recreation and ensuring personal accountability. This legislation is crucial for the continued success of organizations dedicated to preserving Oregon's natural resources and promoting public enjoyment of these assets.

Thank you for considering this important matter.

Sincerely,

Michelle Emmons

Executive Director & Upper Willamette Riverkeeper, Willamette Riverkeeper  
Founding Board Member, Oakridge Trails Alliance

*Dedicated public servant protecting access for safe, enjoyable, and sustainable outdoor experiences*