



February 18, 2025

To: Senate Committee on the Judiciary
From: Greenbelt Land Trust

RE: Support for Permanence for Expanded Recreational Immunity Protections through S.B. 179

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Committee Members:

Greenbelt Land Trust is a regional conservation organization with a mission of conserving the lands and waters of the Willamette Valley for a more resilient future. We write to you today in strong support of S.B. 179, a bill that would make permanent enhanced recreational immunity protections for public and private landowners.

As of 2023, there were 90 land trust properties open for public use in Oregon. The Oregon Public Use of Lands Act encourages public and private landowners to make their land available to the public for recreational purposes by providing landowners immunity from liability.

At Greenbelt Land Trust we provide access to several of our protected properties to the public, including hosting some of the most popular public trails in Benton County. **We depend on the Oregon Public Use of Lands Act and recreational immunity to enable us to be providers of trail access for all.**

S.B. 179 would continue the protections passed during the 2024 legislative session by removing the sunset of January 2026. If there is interest in the Committee, we would also support proposed amendments to S.B. 179 that:

- Extend the immunity in Section 1 of the bill to private landowners who open their land to the public free of charge (currently private landowners in rural areas who fall under this section must rely on ordinance adoption by the local jurisdiction),
- Clarify that trails that serve a dual purpose as both recreation and transportation facilities are covered under the law, and
- Include broader language such as "means of conveyance" rather than the walking, biking, and running currently spelled out in the "includes but is not limited to" list.

We urge this Committee to pass S.B. 179 and make permanent the recreational immunity protections that allow our land trusts and private landowners across Oregon to safely open their lands for public use and enjoyment. Thank you for your consideration and the time to testify.

Sincerely,

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