

Submitter: Bradford Root

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

Dear Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,

As a resident of Oregon and an avid enthusiast of towed water sports on the Willamette River's Newberg Pool, I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 301. This legislation is crucial for restoring equitable access to our state's waterways for families and individuals who cherish activities such as tubing, wakeboarding, and water skiing.

In 2022, Senate Bill 1589 introduced significant restrictions on towed water sports within the Newberg Pool Congested Zone. Specifically, it prohibited wake surfing and imposed a maximum loading weight limit of 5,500 pounds for motorboats to obtain a towed watersports motorboat certificate. This weight includes the boat's dry weight plus its maximum factory ballast capacity.

While the intent of SB 1589 was to enhance safety and environmental protection, its implementation has inadvertently marginalized a substantial portion of the boating community. Many families, including mine, have found themselves unable to participate in beloved water sports due to these stringent weight restrictions. The inclusion of maximum ballast capacity in the total weight calculation has been particularly problematic, as it disqualifies numerous recreational boats that, despite having ballast capabilities, are used responsibly and without utilizing their full ballast capacity.

Senate Bill 301 seeks to address these unintended consequences by directing the State Marine Board to study issues related to the safe operation of motorboats. This initiative represents a balanced approach to revisiting existing regulations, ensuring they serve both safety objectives and the public's right to access and enjoy Oregon's waterways.

My family and I have long enjoyed spending our summers on the Newberg Pool, engaging in activities like tubing and wakeboarding. These experiences have not only strengthened our family bonds but have also connected us with a diverse community of boating enthusiasts who share a deep appreciation for Oregon's natural beauty.

The restrictions imposed by SB 1589 have disrupted these cherished traditions. Our boat, which we selected for its safety features and suitability for family activities, now falls outside the permissible weight limit due to its ballast capacity—a feature we do not fully utilize. This has forced us, along with many others, to seek alternative

locations, diminishing the sense of community and leading to overcrowding in other areas not designed to accommodate increased boating traffic.

Beyond personal impacts, the restrictions have had adverse effects on local businesses that rely on the boating community. Marine supply stores, equipment rental services, and local eateries have all experienced a downturn due to decreased boating activity in the Newberg Pool. By supporting SB 301, we can help revitalize these businesses and support the local economy.

It is important to note that the boating community is committed to safety and environmental stewardship. Many of us have completed safety education courses, adhere to best practices to minimize environmental impact, and actively participate in river clean-up initiatives. The proposed study by the State Marine Board will provide an opportunity to develop regulations that reflect current data and technological advancements, ensuring that safety and environmental concerns are addressed without unduly restricting public access.

Senate Bill 301 offers a pathway to reevaluate and potentially amend existing regulations in a manner that balances safety, environmental protection, and public access. By supporting this bill, we can work towards inclusive policies that allow families like mine to continue enjoying the rich recreational opportunities that Oregon's waterways have to offer.