

Submitter: Megan Liles

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

Dear Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,

My name is Megan L., and I am a frequent user of the Willamette River. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 301. This legislation aims to ensure that the towed water sports community is treated equitably, similar to other boaters, in the deep waters of the Newberg Pool.

Currently, boaters with vessels equipped for ballast are unfairly restricted from engaging in activities like tubing, water skiing, and wakeboarding in the Newberg Pool. This is because the unused ballast weight is included in the total weight calculation. For instance, a fishing or pontoon boat with a dry weight of 5,500 pounds is permitted to tow a tuber in the Newberg Pool, while a lighter recreational boat is prohibited solely due to its ballast capability.

The proposed change would simplify the Oregon State Marine Board's management of the towed water sports program and clarify boat qualification criteria for users. The absence of a national standard for registering ballast capacity complicates compliance. Additionally, the legislation's emphasis on "maximum ballast capacity" has been unduly punitive. Families who have purchased boats with smaller ballast capacities to remain under the 5,500-pound combined weight limit have been denied permits because their boat model offers a larger ballast option they did not select.

I do not believe it was the legislators' intention to exclude over 90% of new recreational boat models from the river, thereby harming local small businesses and making it nearly impossible for everyday individuals to purchase qualifying boats. We seek the opportunity to share the river, spend quality time with our families, and safely enjoy the sports we love during the limited months of favorable weather each year.

With this legislation, the Newberg Pool will continue to be one of Oregon's most highly regulated water bodies. To tow riders in this stretch of the river, boaters must meet the weight requirement, complete an online safety education course, apply for a towed watersports decal, and pay additional fees.

Please support local small businesses and families like mine by passing this modest yet meaningful legislation.

Respectfully,

Megan L.