

**Senate Committee on Energy and Environment**

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court Street NE

Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Opposition to SB 301 – Protect Public Safety and Habitat in the Newberg Pool and the Greater Willamette River**

Dear Chair Senator Sollman, Vice-Chair Senator Findley, and Senators Golden, Hayden, and Lieber,

My name is Mariam Higgins, and I reside in Portland. As an active user of the Willamette River and as an educator, I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 301, specifically the proposed amendment that would remove ballast weight considerations from vessel weight regulations in the Newberg Pool.

I am deeply concerned that this bill would reverse critical progress made under SB 1589 (2022), which significantly improved both public safety and ecological health in this unique and beautiful section of the Willamette River.

**The Newberg Pool has become a vital area for paddlers, swimmers, anglers, and other low-impact waterway users who rely on its calm waters, including children.** The ballast weight restrictions under SB 1589 were key in reducing unsafe wakes and minimizing conflicts among different types of river users. Removing these regulations would reintroduce the enforcement challenges that had long plagued the area.

In addition to public safety concerns, this change could have severe ecological consequences.

**The Newberg Pool is a critical habitat for federally protected Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead.** Larger wakes generated by heavily ballasted boats contribute to shoreline erosion, degrade spawning habitat, and pose a serious threat to already vulnerable fish populations.

The rationale behind this amendment is unclear, especially considering it seems to prioritize a small group of large wake boat operators at the expense of the broader community and the health of the river.

**SB 1589 is working to restore balance in the Newberg Pool, create safer conditions for all users, and protect vital habitats. SB 301 and its amendment would undo this progress, and I strongly urge you to reject them.**

Please prioritize public safety and environmental health. **I respectfully request that you vote NO on SB 301 and its proposed -1 amendment.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Mariam Higgins