

Submitter: Patrick McDonald
On Behalf Of: Northwest Boat Sports
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Patrick McDonald and I'm here today representing Northwest Boat Sports. We've proudly served the community for almost 15 years and currently employ 14 full-time staff. Our team includes sales, service, and support professionals—people with families who rely on this industry for their livelihood.

We are a small business rooted in boating recreation. Our work supports local jobs and contributes to the broader economy through equipment sales, maintenance, and recreation-based commerce.

Supporting SB 301 offers a small but critical fix that directly benefits businesses like ours and the families we serve. Years ago, I listened to testimony in a committee hearing just like this. One of the committee members said this would have little to no impact on small businesses and dismissed it as a nonissue. I'm here today to tell you it is a big deal. Our business is down significantly because of these rules placed on our public waterway.

This issue has had and will continue to have a real and harmful impact on Northwest Boat Sports. We've lost sales because frustrated customers abandon purchasing altogether. Boats that are completely legal to operate in other parts of Oregon can't be used here, so customers don't buy or take their business out of state. This hurts our employees, our revenue, and our ability to continue investing in our community.

The current 5,500-pound weight limit—based on factory dry weight plus ballast—confuses consumers and unfairly limits access. There's no national standard for this combined weight, and customers often don't know their boat is disqualified until it's too late, even if they don't use ballast.

Ballast isn't even allowed in the Newberg Pool, so it shouldn't be factored into the weight limit at all. Switching to factory dry weight makes sense—it aligns with how boats are actually used in this zone and makes enforcement simpler and more transparent. Why would we have a 5,500-pound boat with ballast when we can't even use ballast? This rule absolutely makes zero sense.

Right now, just 3% of the boats we carry qualify under the current rule. That's not sustainable for our business, employees, or the customers trying to enjoy safe, family-friendly recreation.

Please support small businesses and fair, clear rules. I respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill 301.

Thank you for your time.