

Chair Kropf and Committee Members:

My name is Kat Mullins and I write to you today in strong support of S.B. 179A, a bill that would provide continued recreational immunity protections for public and private land open for recreational opportunities.

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. In 2023, an Oregon Court of Appeals decision undermined the immunity guaranteed in the Act, threatening access to public and private land available to Oregonians for their recreational use and enjoyment.

In the 2024 legislative session, lawmakers passed S.B. 1576A to temporarily restore recreational immunity protections on public and private land. The legislation added “walking, biking, and running” to the list of recreational activities and extended liability protections through January 2, 2026.

I am a new resident of Portland, Oregon. Since arriving in March, I have turned to public use land trust spaces such as Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area to find a sense of belonging and peace. S.B. 179A decreases risk for landowners and thereby, lessens the obstacles to providing the public with access to protected areas. Now more than ever it is necessary to offer easy avenues for our citizens to meaningfully connect with their environs—to build a familiarity and realize the urgency of defending these increasingly threatened spaces. It is time to take the burden of fear off the landowners hoping to partner with land trusts. Their generosity deserves to be matched with legal protection.

Please support the passage of S.B. 179A in the 2025 legislative session. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kat Mullins
Resident of Portland, OR