

Submitter: Wendy Wagner

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB179

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of SB179, a bill that is a win for landowners and for everyone who wants to explore our fantastic state. As a hiker, backpacker, and trail runner, I know that that access to trails is the biggest issue facing my sports. I also know that these activities are some of the biggest growing hobbies in our state, and interest in exploring Oregon's natural landscapes is exploding.

When people get outside on foot, it connects them to the landscape and to each other. I've made tons of friends and learned so much about our native plants and animals just by putting one foot in front of the other. These activities have taken me outside my home town in the Willamette Valley and gotten me to connect with people all over the state! Because of these connections, I know that outdoor recreation is a boon to many rural economies.

By passing lasting recreational immunity protections to keep Oregon's trails open, SB179 is a smart, cost-effective bill that makes it easier and safer for everyone involved in outdoor recreation. We really have to pass it!

That said, I'd like to go on the record noting that this bill could be even better. We need legislation to extend the increased level of immunity in Section 1 of the bill to private landowners who open their land to the public free of charge. We should also clarify more strongly that trails that serve dual purpose as both recreation and transportation facilities are covered under the law, and address the problem of subjective intent.

As the trail racing season and backpacking seasons begin, I know my fellow trail runners and hikers will be discussing this legislation and keeping our fingers crossed that it passes.

Sincerely,
Wendy N. Wagner
Author and foot traveler
Milwaukie, OR