



April 23, 2025

Representative Jason Kropf, Chair
Representative Willy Chotzen, Vice-Chair
Representative Kim Wallan, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

RE: SB179, Recreational Immunity Testimony

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Chotzen, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Bend Park and Recreation District (BPRD), I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 179, which makes permanent the critical changes to recreational immunity enacted by the legislature last year.

BPRD is a special district in Central Oregon that provides parks, trails, and recreational programs to over 108,000 residents and more than 1.4 million annual visitors. Access to recreation, whether it is through parks, natural areas, the Deschutes River, or our well-loved trail network, is essential to the quality of life in Bend and vital to our local economy.

The district manages over 3,500 acres of parks and open space, more than 90 miles of trails, and offers over 1,000 recreation programs each year. We work collaboratively with the City of Bend, private landowners, and other public agencies to provide seamless trail connections and enhance wayfinding across the community. These partnerships are essential in offering safer, more connected, and more accessible routes for people of all ages and abilities when they are recreating, commuting to work or school, walking their dog, or simply enjoying the outdoors.

Recreational immunity plays a key role in preserving this access. Without these protections, landowners may be less willing to allow public access through their property, threatening critical trail linkages (existing and planned) and the broader network that so many rely on for travel around town.

We also encourage the committee to consider the ongoing uncertainties around user intent, particularly on trails and in shared spaces. As a public land manager, we believe that trail users running to improve their health, biking to a local restaurant, or walking to reach the river are all engaging in recreation. SB 179 is a positive and necessary step toward ensuring these types of uses are protected under the law.

Thank you for your time and for your work to support safe, equitable access to public lands and recreation across Oregon. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of Senate Bill 179.

Sincerely,


Michelle Healy
Executive Director

District Office

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