



June 10, 2025

Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue  
Oregon State Capitol, 900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Meek and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,750 members and 8,500 businesses in Central Oregon, we appreciate the opportunity to provide support for SB 1196 and the –1 amendment. We are pleased to see this important issue back on the table for consideration this session, especially given the recent announcement that the nation's largest ski industry insurance provider is no longer providing coverage in Oregon due to the liability climate. This is a dire situation and requires action by the legislature to ensure our ski areas can continue to operate in Oregon.

Some history on our support for this issue: during the summer of 2024, the Bend Chamber convened a group of regional business CEOs and developed an agenda of shared priorities. Understanding the impact of the recreation and outdoor industry on our local economy, liability waiver reform was among the issues supported by the regional business leaders from a wide variety of sectors including healthcare, financial services, housing development, bioscience, retail, and outdoor recreation.

The recreation industry is a critical sector of our economy in Central Oregon, as the region supports numerous large companies in addition to serving as an incubator for start-ups and local small businesses. The impacts are far reaching, as local recreation enthusiasts and visitors spent more than \$380 million in Bend alone in 2023<sup>1</sup>. This spending supported 3,470 full- and part-time jobs making it one of our community's most vibrant industry sectors. However, the current liability climate makes it extremely difficult to ensure businesses operate in this space. Our underlying support for the changes contemplated in the bill are based on two key factors:

#### **Protecting local jobs and revenue**

The recreation industry generates significant revenue for the region via direct services such as guided raft and ski tours as well as products and gear. Central Oregon is home to many of the state's recreation product businesses, and they are a large employer and a key part of our business ecosystem.

#### **Making Oregon a business-friendly state**

Doing business in Oregon can be difficult, especially for small businesses and start-ups. We have a complex regulatory system, significant tax burden for businesses, and labor shortages in many industries. Our state's recreation liability laws are among the weakest in the country, and yet another barrier for businesses in this sector. We support reasonable reform allowing Oregon to welcome more indoor and outdoor recreation-centered businesses and continue our identity as a haven for recreation enthusiasts.

Supporting policies that create a business-friendly Oregon is a guiding principle for the Bend Chamber during the 2025 session, and the passage of this bill would be a welcome start. We urge a yes vote on the bill and thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Impact of Travel in Bend, 2023 <https://industry.visitbend.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-Dean-Runyan.pdf>

Regards,

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