

Support SB 1593: Increasing Access to recreational opportunities

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Drazan, and Members of the Committee:

I represent the Oregon Coast Visitors Association and the Coos Bay North Bend Charleston Visitor and Convention Bureau. On their behalf, I am writing to you today to urge passage of SB 1593. Too many visitors are priced out of the recreational market for certain activities due to higher-than-necessary insurance costs.

We want people to be safe when they engage in these activities. That's why we support the guides, outfitters and other recreational providers. Their expertise makes exploring new recreational endeavors safer for beginners. We'd rather see more people get professional guidance that prevents issues and potential for lifelong injury, rather than risk a greater likelihood of lifelong injury.

Lacking liability waiver protections drive up costs for outdoor recreational pursuits. This creates an inequitable situation for many families who then can't afford to go catch that first Chinook salmon or enjoy a wonderful, expertly guided, paddle on one of our glorious waterways. Our region provides spectacular recreational experiences that are once-in-a-lifetime for many, including cresting a sand dune with the wind in your face; or hooking and battling the mighty Chinook salmon; or shredding a mountain bike trail; or learning the joy of kayaking in a saltwater estuary. The list goes on.

Guide and charter businesses are not giant corporations, as some would have you believe. They are one-person operations in many cases. Most have fewer than 10 employees. They aren't getting rich from this. It's their livelihood to share their passion with others. Lacking liability waiver protection forces higher insurance costs, which these small businesses then have no choice but to pass along. We are one of very few states that does not have liability protections. This is standing in the way of accessibility and our state's price competitiveness for tourism markets.

This bill is good for small businesses AND their customers. It allows the guides a little bit easier chance to make a living. And many more individuals and families will have the opportunity to make memories on the Oregon Coast that they will cherish for a lifetime. We think more of our hard-working coastal visitors and residents deserve to safely experience the wonderful adventures the Oregon Coast has to offer. And, as such, we urge you to pass SB 1593.

Sincerely,

Rick Osborn
Blue Ridge Strategies