



Oregon Outfitters & Guides Association

Serving Oregon Outfitters Since 1963

Submitter: Brian Sykes

On Behalf Of: Oregon Outfitters & Guides Association

Committee: Senate Committee on Commerce and General Government

Measure: SB 1593

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Drazan, members of the committee

My name is Brian Sykes, and I am the President of the Oregon Outfitters & Guides Association. Formed in 1963 as Oregon Guides and Packers, our organization serves all outfitters and guides licensed and operating in Oregon. We advocate for the preservation, growth, and stability of the outfitting and guiding industry. Our industry provides sustainable jobs, supports rural economies, and helps protect and conserve our state's remarkable natural resources.

Guides and outfitters provide a wide range of outdoor opportunities to a diverse cross-section of the public. From families and individuals to schools, nonprofits, and youth organizations, we serve as the gateway to the outdoors, as well as its ambassadors and interpreters. Providing these opportunities has become increasingly challenging for the more than 1,300 outfitters and guides currently registered in Oregon.

Unlike every other western state, liability waivers are not enforceable in Oregon. This has created a legal environment that places outfitters and guides at unreasonable risk. It has also contributed to fewer insurance options and a significant increase in liability insurance premiums. It is also important to note that liability insurance is a requirement for operating on federal land and most outfitters in Oregon operate under federal permits. The current environment has suppressed wage growth, increased operational costs, and forced price increases—ultimately limiting access to the outdoors for some members of the public.

SB 1593 offers a simple and balanced solution. The act would provide stability for the outfitting and guiding industry by normalizing the liability landscape and creating a more workable environment for insurers. It would align Oregon with other western states, as well as with liability provisions in recent federal legislation. **In addition we would strongly support a proposed amendment allowing parents to make the decision to sign a waiver on behalf of their minor children.** Parents make many decisions every day that have major implications to their children's health and safety. This should be no different. Our kids' ability to access outdoor recreation experiences is at stake.

A stable and thriving outfitter and guide industry supports jobs and rural economies, promotes healthy lifestyles through outdoor recreation, and helps educate and inspire conservation of Oregon's extraordinary natural places. Outfitters and guides are good for Oregon.

Apart from my role with the guide association, as the owner of Ouzel Outfitters I have been an outfitter and guide in Oregon for more than three decades. I have been involved with a wide range of legislative and administrative rule-making issues related to the industry - from training, safety and equipment requirements to registration requirements, fees and ethics. In my time I have not seen legislation more impactful to outfitters and guides than SB 1593. The Oregon outfitter and guide community strongly supports the passage of SB 1593.

Sincerely,
Brian Sykes, President
Oregon Outfitters & Guides Association