

Written Testimony in Support of SB 1593

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Joey Jewell, I am the Chief Sales Officer for Travel Salem, and I serve as Executive Director of the Salem Area Sports Commission. I am submitting this written testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 1593 along with support for an amendment to the bill to include the ability for Parental Guardians to sign on behalf of minors.

Oregon's recreation, sports tourism, and health and fitness sectors play a meaningful role in the state's economy and in the physical and mental well-being of residents and visitors. A significant share of this activity occurs in public recreation settings including parks, trails, waterways, and open spaces. Organized recreation events and guided activities depend on the ability of operators to manage risk responsibly while still providing access to inherently risky environments.

Senate Bill 1593 establishes an appropriate and widely accepted balance by allowing adult participants to voluntarily release operators from claims of ordinary negligence while preserving full accountability for conduct that rises above that standard. This approach aligns Oregon with every other western state and with federal policy reflected in the EXPLORE Act. Without this protection, many recreation and event operators face prohibitive insurance costs or the inability to obtain coverage at all, which directly limits their ability to operate in Oregon.

From a tourism perspective, recreation-based events are a key driver of visitation, particularly in shoulder seasons and in communities that do not rely on large scale facilities. These events generate lodging, food service, and retail activity, and they produce direct revenue for parks and land managers through permits and use fees. That revenue supports maintenance, operations, and public access to natural resources that residents value.

From a public health perspective, organized recreation events provide structured, accessible opportunities for physical activity. Public health research consistently shows that regular participation in physical activity reduces rates of chronic disease, improves mental health outcomes, and lowers long-term health care costs. Recreation events also

help normalize healthy behaviors by engaging participants, volunteers, and spectators across a wide range of ages and abilities.

Importantly, many recreation and sports event operators serve as active stewards of the lands they use. Industry standards often include trail maintenance, trash removal, habitat protection measures, and volunteer coordination. These efforts extend the capacity of public agencies and reinforce responsible use of Oregon's outdoor spaces.

Senate Bill 1593 does not reduce safety standards or excuse negligent behavior. Instead, it restores clarity and fairness by allowing informed adults to assume inherent risks while ensuring that operators remain accountable for serious misconduct. This clarity is essential to sustaining Oregon's recreation economy, supporting public health, protecting natural resources, and maintaining access to outdoor opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support Senate Bill 1593.

Respectfully submitted,

Joey Jewell
Executive Director
Salem Area Sports Commission