



February 15, 2026

Testimony in Opposition of SB 1517

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and Members of the Committee,

As a National Historic Landmark and one of Oregon's most iconic recreation destinations, Timberline employs hundreds of Oregonians each year and supports countless local businesses. Outdoor recreation is not only our livelihood, it is central to Oregon's identity.

I respectfully urge you to oppose SB 1517 as amended by either the -6 or the -7 amendments.

In 2022, following a court ruling involving Skibowl's mountain bike park, Timberline's bike park insurance was canceled, forcing an early closure that directly affected trail crews, lift operators, and hospitality staff. More recently, on May 30, 2025, we were notified that our remaining liability insurance carrier is leaving Oregon altogether due to the state's unfavorable recreational liability climate.

Oregon is facing a growing affordability crisis in recreation, health, and fitness. Prices are rising, businesses are closing, insurers are exiting the state, and families are losing access to the activities they value most. SB 1517 does not return Oregon to legal alignment with other Western states, nor does it address the root causes of the insurance crisis.

Since 2014, Oregon court decisions have effectively undermined the enforceability of liability waivers. The result has been lost insurance coverage, sharply increased premiums, higher consumer costs, and fewer recreational opportunities. Every other Western state recognizes liability waivers as part of a balanced legal framework that preserves accountability while acknowledging inherent risk. Oregon is the outlier.

The Legislature must restore the long-standing standard that governed Oregon for decades by creating a clear, predictable framework around inherent risk and personal responsibility. Without that clarity, recreational injury cases are resolved through prolonged and costly litigation. Many providers cannot afford to defend themselves and are forced to settle claims even when injuries result from inherent risks or individual decisions.

As a ski area operating on federal land, our Special Use Permit requires us to maintain liability insurance and indemnify the U.S. Forest Service. Without available and affordable insurance, continued operation is simply not possible.

As a supporter of Oregon's recreation and fitness community, I remain deeply concerned that SB 1517, even with the -6 or -7 amendments, does not solve the insurance crisis facing providers statewide. While the amendments represent incremental improvements, they still fail to provide the clarity and predictability insurers need to remain in or return to Oregon. No other state has adopted an approach like the one proposed here.

SB 1593, by contrast, has broad bipartisan support, directly addresses the recreational insurance crisis, and is already further along in the legislative process.

For these reasons, I urge you to refocus your efforts on advancing SB 1593 and to oppose SB 1517 as amended. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Burton
Director of Marketing & Public Affairs
Timberline