

March 1st, 2026
Re: SB 1517
Position: Oppose (as currently written)



TRAILKEEPERS OF OREGON

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Pham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Steve Kruger, and I serve as Executive Director of Trailkeepers of Oregon (TKO), a statewide nonprofit partner to federal, state, and local land managers.

Each year, TKO mobilizes thousands of volunteers who contribute nearly 23,000 hours of trail maintenance, restoration, accessibility improvements, and public engagement across Oregon. Our volunteers repair bridges, clear blowdown, restore trails after wildfire and flood events, and help keep public lands safe and accessible. Recreational liability protections are essential to sustaining this work.

Public land agencies are facing significant staffing and budget shortfalls, and nonprofits like ours are stepping up to help meet growing maintenance needs. But we need liability reform that aligns Oregon with neighboring states — reducing insurance uncertainty while preserving accountability for gross negligence or intentional misconduct.

Throughout this session, we have supported the language in SB 1593A as a balanced and workable solution.

SB 1517-7 as currently written does not provide that balance. The lack of clear protection for environmental restoration and maintenance activities — combined with the extensive waiver exceptions — would leave stewardship organizations and volunteer board members exposed to continued liability risk without meaningfully reducing insurance costs.

However, we appreciate the constructive amendments now under consideration.

We would support moving SB 1517 forward with the -A11 or -A15 amendments. The -A11 amendment incorporates the language we have supported all session. We would also support -A15 if that represents the Legislature's path toward compromise and clarity.

Balanced liability protections enhance public safety by ensuring trained volunteer leaders and recreation providers can continue guiding outdoor programming responsibly.

We respectfully ask that SB 1517 move forward only with amendments that provide meaningful and workable protections for stewardship and conservation organizations.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Kruger', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

TKO Executive Director