

Submitter: Robert Bennett

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Pham, and members of the committee, My name is Rob, and I am a owner of a family-owned health and fitness club in Eugene. Our club has served this community for decades. We employ local residents, partner with other small businesses, and provide a place where people of all ages come to improve their mental, physical, and emotional health.

I am writing to respectfully oppose SB 1517A as it is currently written.

What small organizations like ours need is meaningful liability waiver reform that brings Oregon in line with other states. We need clearer, enforceable standards that reduce uncertainty and help stabilize insurance costs. Without that certainty, it becomes increasingly difficult to operate programs that serve families, seniors, youth athletes, and working professionals who rely on us to stay healthy and connected. Unfortunately, SB 1517A does not provide that certainty. While the bill appears to allow waivers, it then outlines 28 separate exceptions that would prevent them from being enforced. From a practical standpoint, that does not improve the status quo, it increases ambiguity and risk. There is also no meaningful protection for stewardship activities or the types of programming many of us provide in good faith to benefit our communities.

As a business owner who signs personal guarantees, meets payroll, and navigates rising operating costs every month, I cannot support legislation that creates more exposure while offering the appearance of reform. We need real solutions that allow insurers to confidently underwrite risk and allow organizations like ours to continue offering access to health and fitness opportunities.

I do believe there is a path forward. I would support moving SB 1517A forward if it includes the -A11 or -A15 amendments. The -A11 amendment contains the clear, enforceable language we have been requesting from the beginning. Alternatively, we would be willing to consider the broader applicability of the -A15 amendment as a workable compromise.

Our goal is not to avoid accountability. We operate responsibly and take safety seriously every single day. Our goal is simply to have the same clarity and legal framework that similar organizations have in neighboring states, so we can continue serving Oregonians without facing untenable insurance risk.

Thank you for your leadership and for taking the time to consider the perspective of small, locally owned businesses like ours. I appreciate your work on this issue and hope you will consider amendments that provide meaningful reform.

Sincerely,

Rob Bennett