

Submitter: Caleb Runyan

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

I am a Oregon fishing guide or outfitter. Our industry is made up of mostly small and very small family-run businesses and provides sustainable jobs, enhances rural economies, and introduces people to Oregon's amazing wild areas.

As you know, unlike every other West Coast state, Oregon is an outlier when it comes to recognizing liability waivers. And Oregon is now one of the most difficult places to run an outdoor recreation business — insurance premiums are skyrocketing, and options to even be insured are dwindling. This year has, as our situation has become more public, been especially brutal. Many outfitters are worried about being insured this coming season.

SB 1517-7, as written, would make the situation worse than the current law, not better. If passed as is, we would be in a worse situation than we are now (and the current situation is not sustainable).

For outfitters and guides to survive, we need the legislature to declare that liability waivers are enforceable as a matter of public policy.

We are not asking for a free pass. We are just asking for the same simple, balanced approach that every other state around us uses (and Oregon used to use). A well-tested solution that recognizes that there are inherent risks to

recreational activities while still giving guests an avenue to bring a case to the courts.

We love Oregon, we love public lands, we love our many public-private partnerships, and we're honored to be

partners in getting people outside. But this process has definitely shaken our members' faith in the Oregon State

Legislature. To many of our members, this process feels like a soap opera. But this is our livelihood at stake, and

feeling like you're a pawn in a soap opera does not feel like good government.

The process does not make sense to us when we see SB1593, a bill that is broadly popular, that passed out of

committee with a bipartisan 5-0 vote, and that, by all accounts, would pass the legislature in an overwhelming

bipartisan majority, get buried. Yet a bill that actually makes the situation worse and has almost no support continues

to move forward.

While we are so extremely grateful for the strong support we are getting from an overwhelming majority of legislators, it is disheartening, depressing, and yes, it makes members angry when we see a tiny minority of legislators, backed by one very tiny group of very wealthy people, stop something so broadly popular from even coming to a vote. And we can't help but feel that some in the legislature are bending to a small group of high-dollar donors at the expense of regular Oregonians.

It is also hard to hear things on the floor of the Senate like, "river companies and guides and outfitters are just hiding behind lobbyists." Anybody who has actually run a small business knows that it is an all-consuming job — a combination of passion, energy, and a good dose of hard-headedness. There's not a lot of free time. This is especially true in the current economic times. Despite that, we have all spent an inordinate amount of time writing letters, and driving to Salem and back from all corners of the state. This process favors groups with time and money, but it is not easy for small business owners. We are not lobbyists, we are not giant companies, and we are not hiding behind anyone - we are just trying to survive.

Oregon Outfitters & Guides Association • 63043 Sherman Road, Bend, OR 97701 • 541-385-0461 • [info@ogpa.org](mailto:info@ogpa.org)

Once again, there is only one very small, very well-connected, and very wealthy group that is against these common-sense changes. Meanwhile, the small and family-run businesses and nonprofits that get people outdoors, that help keep Oregonians fit, that help to protect our environment, and that provide mostly blue-collar jobs, are begging for help.

And after 10 years of kicking the can down the road on this issue, it is far too late to try some sort