

Submitter: Damon and Heather Kupper
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,

We are writing to you as owner-operators of Peak Tours and Transit LLC, a family-owned sightseeing tour company based here in Oregon. Last year alone, we served more than 10,000 visitors to our state. We write today in strong opposition to SB 1517.

As currently written, SB 1517 would make conditions more difficult for small, responsible operators like us, not better. If outfitters and guides are going to survive in this environment, we need the legislature to clearly state that liability waivers are enforceable as a matter of public policy. The straightforward, common-sense language in SB 1593 accomplishes exactly that.

Tourism is not just recreation. It is an economic engine. It creates jobs, sustains small businesses, strengthens rural and urban communities, and enhances public spaces. When visitors have exceptional experiences in Oregon, they stay longer, spend more, return again, and encourage others to visit. As tour operators, we are on the front lines of that experience. Every day, we introduce guests to Oregon's landscapes, history, wineries, restaurants, and small businesses. We are not abstract participants in tourism policy; we are actively driving it. PLEASE HEAR OUR CRY!

This year alone, our insurance premiums increased by more than 35 percent, despite zero claims, zero incidents, zero lawsuits, and zero losses. We have done everything right. The instability in Oregon's recreation liability environment is creating uncertainty, and that uncertainty is being priced directly into our insurance costs.

ORCA offers a fair and balanced solution. It allows informed adults who voluntarily choose to participate in recreational activities to acknowledge ordinary risks and release operators from ordinary negligence, like in most other states. It provides stability for insurers, predictability for businesses, and protection for consumers who knowingly choose to participate.

We respectfully urge you to oppose SB 1517 and instead support legislation that protects responsible small businesses while maintaining reasonable accountability. Oregon says it values small, family-owned operators and a thriving tourism economy. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that commitment in action.

Thank you for your time and consideration.