

Submitter: Gavin Mahaley  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

My name is Gavin Mahaley, and I serve as Communications & Development Director for the Salmonberry Trail Foundation. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Foundation in opposition to SB 1517 as currently written. We urge the Committee to move SB 1517 forward only with the -A11 or -A15 amendments.

As a nonprofit working to develop and steward an 82-mile multiuse trail in Northwest Oregon, liability protections are fundamental to our ability to operate. We coordinate volunteer trail work, lead guided outings, host educational programs, and partner with public agencies to maintain public access to the outdoors. Clear and enforceable liability waivers are essential to sustaining that work.

Throughout this session, we supported stronger and more comprehensive liability reform language that would have provided meaningful clarity and certainty for recreation and stewardship organizations. SB 1517-7 does not meet that standard.

As currently drafted, SB 1517 does not provide adequate protection for stewardship activities and leaves nonprofit organizations and volunteer board members exposed to continued legal uncertainty. The restrictions on waiver language risk increasing — rather than reducing — liability exposure and insurance costs for small organizations like ours.

The -A11 amendment reflects the balanced and workable approach we have consistently supported. The -A15 amendment, while broader in scope, would also provide meaningful protections while preserving accountability for gross negligence and intentional misconduct.

We are prepared to support SB 1517 if amended accordingly.

Recreational liability reform is not about avoiding responsibility. It is about ensuring that trained leaders and conservation nonprofits can continue to guide volunteers, maintain trails, and expand safe access to Oregon's public lands without facing unnecessary legal ambiguity.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that SB 1517 move forward only with the -A11 or -A15 amendments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Gavin Mahaley  
Communications & Development Director  
Salmonberry Trail Foundation