

Submitter: Zachary Collier
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 Zach Collier and I am the owner of Northwest Rafting Company. We are an Oregon-based outfitter operating multi-day river trips and instructional courses throughout Oregon and Idaho. We employ seasonal guides, maintain full-time staff, and support small rural communities by purchasing food, fuel, and supplies near the public lands where we operate.

I am writing in opposition to SB 1517-7.

As written, SB 1517-7 would make our current situation worse. The legal uncertainty following the recent court decisions has already made insurance harder to find and significantly more expensive. The situation is not sustainable for small outfitters. Passing SB 1517-7 in its current form would create even more ambiguity, and ambiguity is exactly what insurers react negatively to.

For outfitters and guides to survive, the Legislature needs to clearly declare that liability waivers are enforceable as a matter of public policy. That clarity is essential. The common-sense language in SB 1593 does exactly that.

We are not asking for immunity or a free pass. We are asking for the same balanced approach used by nearly every other Western state - a framework that recognizes inherent risk in recreation while still preserving a guest's ability to bring legitimate claims.

Outdoor recreation in Oregon depends on small businesses like mine. If we do not restore clarity this session, some outfitters will not make it to next year. That means lost jobs, fewer opportunities for families to experience public lands, and economic harm to rural communities.

We simply want to continue safely introducing people to Oregon's outdoors. But we are running out of time.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,
Zach Collier
Northwest Rafting Company