

Submitter: Denice Searcy
On Behalf Of: Small Recreational Businesses in Oregon
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

NO on SB 1517A

I OPPOSE SB 1517 in the strongest possible terms. I've looked at the testimony of 300+ Oregon businesses and citizens and there is virtually no support for this bill. Even The Oregonian has an article opposing this, describing it as follows:
"A bill in the Oregon Legislature that includes numerous exceptions to enforcement of liability waivers would do nothing to stem the lawsuits and increasing insurance premiums that are overwhelming recreational businesses, the editorial board writes."
LC- The Oregonian

This bill will cause harm to small family-owned businesses, further damage Oregon's unfavorable business climate and create an even more litigious environment than currently exists. SB 1517 creates a poorly conceived and unworkable framework that is bad for the ski industry and even worse for non-ski businesses that offer inherently risky activities. By contrast, I strongly endorse and support SB 1593 (ORCA), which takes a balanced sensible approach to restoring waivers, and aligns Oregon's policy more closely with the other western states. If legislators really want to solve the problem facing recreational businesses, they must recognize what's working in other states — and admit to what's not working here. They should either significantly cut back the many exceptions in SB 1517 or resuscitate SB 1593 as the vehicle for enforcing stronger liability waivers while still protecting Oregonians' ability to sue for serious failures by businesses.

There are two bills in the Legislature which aim to help ski resorts, river guides and other recreational businesses stave off increasing lawsuits — and surging insurance premiums — as injured customers allege minor negligence. One bill has near universal support from a range of outdoor businesses, conservation groups and gyms, while the other has been broadly panned. Guess which one is advancing? Senate Bill 1517, which has received almost no public testimony in its favor, passed the Senate and is now in the House, while the more popular Senate Bill 1593 languishes in the Rules Committee. It seems that at every turn the Oregon Legislature stabs small businesses in the back and continues NOT to protect its citizens. WHY???

Please consider SB 1593 A, which is a workable solution that would meet the needs of our state recreational small businesses.

Thank you,

Denice Searcy