



# City of Coos Bay

The Largest City on the Oregon Coast

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*Office of the City Manager*

March 2, 2026

Representative Ben Bowman, Chair  
House Committee on Rules  
900 Court St. NE, H-295  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: City of Coos Bay Support for SB 1517A with the -A11 or -A15 Amendments

Chair Bowman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the City of Coos Bay, I am writing to express our strong support for SB 1517A **with the -A11 or -A15 amendments**. As Oregon's largest coastal city, we take seriously our responsibility to provide safe, accessible, and enriching recreational opportunities for our residents and visitors alike.

In Coos Bay, recreation is not incidental — it is part of our identity. From PE in the Park and youth sports clinics, to fun-runs, festivals, trail events, and wildlife and waterfront activities, our programs are designed to strengthen community connection, improve public health, and enhance quality of life. These are positive, community-centered experiences that operate safely under normal circumstances. However, like all recreational activities, they carry an inherent and understood element of risk.

Historically, cities have managed this risk responsibly through the use of well-crafted recreation liability waivers. These waivers are not simply legal documents; they serve as an important moment of communication between city staff and participants. They create the opportunity to explain potential risks, outline safety protocols, and ensure participants make informed choices before engaging in an activity.

The 2014 decision by the Oregon Supreme Court in *Bagley v. Mt. Bachelor, Inc.* significantly limited the enforceability of these waivers. In the years since, cities and recreation providers across Oregon have experienced substantial increases in insurance costs and uncertainty in liability exposure. For small and mid-sized communities like Coos Bay, those increased costs do not come from excess — they come directly from program offerings and community services.

It has now been more than a decade since that ruling. Oregon cities remain at a competitive disadvantage compared to other states that recognize and enforce reasonable recreation waivers. The continued uncertainty places pressure on municipal budgets and forces difficult conversations about scaling back or eliminating programs that our communities value.

Codifying the legitimacy of clearly written and fairly administered recreation liability waivers would provide cities like Coos Bay with the confidence to continue offering recreation programs without fear of disproportionate liability exposure. SB 1517A, with the -A11 or -A15 amendments, strikes an appropriate balance between participant awareness and municipal responsibility.

We respectfully urge your support of SB 1517A **with the -A11 or -A15 amendments** to ensure Oregon cities can continue to provide safe, meaningful, and accessible recreational opportunities for our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nichole Rutherford, City Manager