

Submitter: Rhea Larsen Grogan
On Behalf Of: Raising Rooted Kids LLC
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Pham, and members of the committee, As land stewards, recreation providers, and nonprofit advocates, recreational liability protections are critical to fulfilling our mission. As you know both federal and state public agencies maintaining our public lands are facing devastating budget and staffing shortfalls. Meanwhile non-governmental organizations are doing everything we can to continue running programs that create safe and welcoming access to the outdoors for all Oregonians and mobilizing and training volunteers to maintain our trails and waterways for safety, access, and ecosystem health.

I run small, outdoor camps for elementary aged kids with a mission of boosting resilience and reducing anxiety. Public lands are mental health crisis prevention, as witnessed by numbers of participants who have gained confidence and calm with me and simple outdoor spaces as their guide. However, I may not hold camps this summer because of the cost of insurance. It's increasingly difficult to get an affordable insurance plan, required by the city park I use.

We need liability waiver reform that aligns Oregon's laws with other states, reducing costs and creating greater certainty for small organizations. That in turn allows us to continue protecting access and opportunity for recreation and stewardship activities alike.

This session we have consistently shared our support for the policy language in SB 1593A as a workable solution that would meet our needs.

SB 1517-7 as currently written will not provide our organizations and our volunteer board officers with greater security or reduce our insurance costs. There is no protection for stewardship activities and the many explicit exceptions to what can be included in waivers would put us at even greater risk than the already untenable status quo.

However we would be supportive of moving SB 1517 forward with the -A11 or -A15 amendments. The -A11 amendment contains the language we've been asking for all along, and we're also willing to trade the certainties of SB 1593A for the broad applicability of -A15 if that is the legislature's provide route toward a compromise.

Recreational liability protections enhance public safety by ensuring that outfitters, volunteer coordinators, and other trained professionals are able to continue to effectively guide group programming in the outdoors and steward Oregon's natural

spaces we treasure.

Thank you for your leadership,
Rhea Grogan