

Submitter:

Jill Van Winkle

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,

Recreational liability protections are critical to fulfilling the mission of trails stewardship and outdoor recreation opportunity providers. 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.

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 1593 A as a workable solution that would meet our needs.

SB 1517 A 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 support 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 1593 A for the broad applicability of -A15 amendment if that is the legislature's preferred 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.