



March 2, 2026

Re: Oppose SB 1517 As Written

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Pham, Elmer, and Representatives Grayber, Kropf, Skarlantos, and Wallan,

My name is Will Volpert and I'm the owner of Indigo Creek Outfitters in Phoenix, Oregon. I'm here today in opposition to SB 1517A as written, and in support of amendments that move this bill toward a workable solution—specifically the -A11, and, if necessary, a willingness to support the -A15.

I grew up in the river outfitting business. My parents were outfitters and I started running boats in Idaho and Oregon in 2000. In 2004 I moved to the Rogue Valley to attend Southern Oregon University. I paid my way through college by working as a guide during the summer months and at a ranch and Mt. Ashland in the winter. I started Indigo Creek in 2011 and I am proud of what this business has become and the contributions we have made to our community.

Oregon and the outdoor industry have provided my family with the platform to have a small business that is centered around rivers and people. And while I'm thankful for the opportunities, I can't imagine getting this business off the ground in Oregon's current business climate.

Today, unlike in 2011 when I started my business, Oregon does not recognize liability waivers. While national insurers are fleeing the state, national personal injury firms see an opportunity and are moving in, and the cost of insurance is skyrocketing. Since 2019, my liability insurance has tripled. Oregon's unique position on liability waivers has left businesses and families like mine exceptionally vulnerable.

Liability insurance premiums have increased far beyond inflation and are having a severe impact on the affordability of our services. Year after year we have continuously had to raise our prices to the point that even my own family would struggle to afford some of the trips we offer. This is not sustainable for us, it's not fair to thousands of Oregonian's who want to visit the outdoors, and it's not sustainable for Oregon's recreation industry.

Oregonians deserve access to their backyard rivers and mountains. Many of us call Oregon home because of Oregon's natural landscapes and opportunities to recreate. Oregon's current unique position on liability waivers is a betrayal to Oregon families who simply want to spend time outdoors.

The Oregon Trial Lawyers Association has said they oppose 1517. You know it and I know it—they are playing games and providing cover to call this a compromise. SB 1517 is not a compromise. It is a gift to confusion, loopholes, and litigation. The bill is riddled with exemptions and “gotchas” that invite lawsuits rather than resolve them. The ambiguity in 1517 is exactly the problem. The bill, as written, is a dream scenario for trial lawyers and a disaster for recreation providers trying to insure and operate responsibly.

We are not asking for a free pass. SB 1593 was the right bill because it reflects the same simple, balanced, well-tested framework that neighboring states use—and that Oregon itself used to use. Recreational waivers are broadly popular, they work, and they strike a fair compromise: recognizing inherent risk in recreation while preserving a clear path to the courts when gross negligence occurs.

And let’s be honest about why we are discussing a bill with zero industry support, SB 1517, instead of SB 1593, which had overwhelming support. Politics—tainted by big money from the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association. That’s the only reason the overwhelming majority of Oregonians are being ignored. Money. Senator Floyd Prozanski said it best in a quote to *The Oregonian* on February 26: “Follow the money.” I did. Nearly every legislator who has supported SB 1517 up to this point has received money from OTLA. SB 1593 is dead because some politicians didn’t have the courage to stand up for ordinary Oregonians if it meant losing their cash cow.

For outfitters and guides to survive; and to support rural economies, affordable access to outdoor recreation, and a vibrant small business community, we need the legislature to declare that liability waivers are enforceable as a matter of public policy. Language like SB 1593. A simple, popular, well-tested solution that already works in every state around us and used to work in Oregon.

Members of this committee— you can fix this bill. You can adopt an amendment that corrects its flaws and do something meaningful for Oregonians across the state.

Thank you for your support of small family businesses like Indigo Creek Outfitters.

Sincerely,



Will Volpert
Owner, Indigo Creek Outfitters