

Submitter: Rebekah Rottenberg
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

Dear Legislators and House and Senate Leadership,

SB 1517-7 as currently written does not provide adequate protections for organizations leading outdoor recreation and stewardship activities. In fact, it contains exceptions to waivers that may put our organizations and our volunteer board officers at even greater risk if passed as currently written. We hope the bill will be sent to House Rules to address the following concerns:

Stewardship activities like maintenance and restoration are not covered in the list of recreation operators' activities for which waivers can be enforced.

The long list of exceptions to claims that can be included in activity waivers leaves Oregon's small businesses and volunteer organizations holding an untenable level of liability risk. We fully support the exception for "claims for greater than ordinary negligence, including gross negligence, reckless conduct, willful misconduct or intentional acts." We believe some of the other exceptions could put non-profit organizations working to increase safe access to the outdoors and fostering volunteer stewardship of our public lands at even greater risk. Non-profits are often operating on public lands and using public equipment and must not be held liable for environmental hazards.

Lastly for any law passed to rebalance Oregon's recreation liability laws, we would like to see the inclusion of all waivers signed by legal guardians included, not just those for minors. We put great value on all Oregonians having access to outdoor recreation and all members of our families participating together in outdoor recreation and stewardship activities as is safe and appropriate.

We are simultaneously requesting that SB 1593A be scheduled for a hearing and work session in Senate Rules ASAP so that it has time for consideration on the Senate and House Floors this session. SB 1593A provides critical and balanced liability risk protections for conservation and recreation organizations increasing outdoor access and volunteerism for Oregonians while protecting individuals' rights to redress in cases of gross negligence, criminal negligence, or willful acts that put them at risk.

Please don't leave our organizations, small businesses, and public agencies shouldering such a high level of liability risk. We work to provide safe and welcoming access to the outdoors for all Oregonians while leveraging thousands of volunteer hours to care for public lands. Please ensure the protections in SB 1593A have a path forward to being adopted into law this session

Thank you for your leadership,
<Bekah Rottenberg, Brave Endeavors. Hood River, OR