



March 6, 2016

Oregon House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Dear Chair Witt and Committee Members:

I am writing you to oppose House Bill 2716 which requires children 12 years of age and under to wear helmets.

As a river outfitter, my number one priority is the safety of our guests and employees. Requiring children 12 years of age and under to wear helmets at all times on waters that are rated class II and higher does not make our trips safer. In some cases it could make trips less safe.

In Oregon we primarily do trips on the Rogue River which has many class II and III rapids. In between the rapids are long stretches of flatwater and quite often the temperatures are above 100 degrees. To avoid sunburn, heatstroke, and heat exhaustion (these are very serious considerations on a multi-day trip), a cotton hat with a large brim is the safest thing anyone can wear. To cool off it is common to dip the hat in the water and cool off their head quickly. A helmet does not have a brim and acts as an insulator keeping their head warm and promoting heat injuries.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat injury and can occur if body temperature rises above 104 degrees. It requires immediate emergency treatment and can quick damage brain, heart, kidneys, and muscles. On multi-day trips where emergency treatment is far away heat stroke can be more serious than head injuries.

We make helmets available to all of our guests and require them when it makes good sense. There are many times it does not make sense and this law would remove our ability to make good judgements for the safety of our guests.

This law is well intentioned but isn't the best thing for all rivers in the State of Oregon. I do support wearing PFDs at all times because it that is safer but wearing helmets at all times is not necessarily safer. Rules and regulations for helmets should be applied to each river individually.

Sincerely,

Zachary Collier
Owner/Outfitter
Northwest Rafting Company