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**Testimony by Travis Williams, Willamette Riverkeeper and Executive Director on HB 2734, a bill
Directing the Oregon State Marine Board to Study an Excise Tax on Wake Boats**

Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson and Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

For the record, my name is Travis Williams, Riverkeeper and Executive Director of the non-profit organization Willamette Riverkeeper.

Since 1996, we have proudly served as the eyes, ears and voice of the 187 mile long Willamette River. Our conservation and cleanup programs, together with the support of thousands of Oregonians, enable us to effectively generate positive change for the entire Willamette River Basin.

We believe in a river with excellent water quality and abundant habitat which is also safe for fishing and recreation. We believe this is a basic public right. Unfortunately, this right has been challenged by the increasing use of wake boats on the Willamette which create environmental damage through artificial wave action, reduce the enjoyment of the Willamette for other recreational users, and causes damage to the fragile near-shore waters, the nurseries of the river, which are the foundation of the health of the aquatic life in the Willamette.

Other bills that this Committee will hear this session will address excessive boat weight, composition of the Oregon State Marine Board and protection of the Newberg Pool Congested Zone.

HB 2734 simply asks the Oregon State Marine Board to study an excise tax, a tax levied at the time of the initial sale of the boat to generate revenue to study the impact of these boats and determine ways to mitigate that damage to Oregon's waterways.

During the 2019 Session of the Oregon Legislature HB 2351 was passed which creates a duty of the Oregon State Marine Board to consider the environmental consequences of boating in Oregon. All too often we hear that environmental impact data is not available because of lack of funding. This bill helps bring the Marine Board the resources it needs to better protect Oregon's waterways.

An excise tax on wake boats would create a source of revenue, directly linked to the purchase of these high value sporting craft, to fund better understanding of their impacts on Oregon waterways. Wake boats create high energy wakes which damage our environment in many ways, let's tax these boats at purchase to determine the extent of the damage these boats create and what steps can be taken to mitigate this damage, and not unfairly shift the cost of wake boat damage to other Oregon boaters who recreate carefully to leave Oregon's waterways better than they found them.

Chair Witt and Member of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, I urge you to forward this important study bill to the House of Representatives with a DO PASS recommendation.

Thank you.

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