March 5, 2021

Dear Chair Witt and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I would like to share how our family is greatly affected by House Bills 2555, 2725 and 2734, for which I am opposed.

My family enjoys all types of motorized and non-motorized water sports. Should these bills move forward, we will no longer be allowed to be active on the Upper Willamette due to our multiuse boat, and I'm concerned what these bills are ultimately trying to address. There are many boats of all different weights, with equal and larger wakes, that would still be allowed in the Newberg Pool, but these bills do not address these boats. These bills only ban boats that are active, yet have the same wakes as other boats. Through my eight-year old's eyes, it's incredibly confusing and unfair to remove a community on the river, yet allow others.

There are also claims of erosion and disputes, however there is no research conducted for this specific reason that links erosion or damage to docks directly to towing wake boats, or one where we can differentiate between boats, also those towing people, and other manmade and environmental elements. The opinions on March 4th, 2021 during the legislative closed session spoke to University-based opinion versus research, yet still a few have concluded, as Dr. Stan Gregory of OSU stated in previous testimony, "Greater attention to this issue and studies to better inform decisions are needed to protect these important resources for the people of Oregon." Simply put, we need to do the proper research before restricting access.

I am a little dismayed to hear the presenters provide information as though it is proven fact on March 9. It is inequitable that a riverfront homeowner without expert data was able to make claims for more than 20 minutes and was listed as a presenter, when the rest of the public is limited to one minute. This same person provided statements in attempt to prove the Willamette Riverkeeper's 2019 wake boat ban. This particular bias does not belong in a public testimony session as a presenter without proper research and I have concerns is greatly misleading to the public.

For this process to be fair, diverse user groups need to be consulted and research conducted to identify impact, weight limits, and all the components of these bills. Currently this special session made to focus on our state's dire situation, such as COVID and racial inequality, was used to potentially ban two out of every three sport boats that currently have the Towed Sports Endorsement on the Upper.

Safety and education should be a focus for all river users, not solely punish the boats that want to be active and do water sports in the Upper. I believe people want to do the right thing, but if there is some behavior that is unfavorable, we should focus on increased education and enforcement of the existing rules, so that behavior can be changed. If our goal is equity and safety on the river, banning some boats or sports because some don't like it, will not achieve this. We are a government built on fairness and making decisions based on research.

I ask you to not support these bills, because today someone might not like sports on the river, tomorrow it will be something else. Perhaps it's wind surfing in Hood River. Meanwhile, our community is asking for fairness and equity, and unanimously want to use education and law enforcement to make our rivers safer versus pushing traffic elsewhere and prioritizing certain groups. Policy should be based on research and evidence in advance, to protect public safety, access, and the environment. I hope that my children's children will know what it's like to do boat sports and enjoy the lovely environment we have in our backyard, and the reason why we live where we do.

Sincerely,
Erin Patterson