

Chair Witt and committee members,

On behalf of myself and several other people who have served on the Marine Board rule committees and who have had extensive work with the Marine Board over the last several years, I want to express our opposition to bill 2695 because we believe it undermines the mission of the Marine Board and lessens the input of average citizen recreational river users in the process.

We are supportive of transparent and fair representation on the Board. The Board should be an entity that represents all water users. This bill gives an outsize voice to those not in the boating community to potentially create even more rules to restrict access to the water.

One aspect of the bill I'd like to draw attention to is the seat for a floating home owner. We have many homeowners as part of the Willamette River Community Coalition. Even they find it inappropriate to have a seat on the Board allocated just to this exclusive community. Our homeowner members have stated again and again that it is a privilege to get to live on a public river and to be allowed to build docks that prevent public use of parts of that waterway.

I will add that we are all deeply concerned about recent suggestions we have heard that the Willamette River should be treated in the same way as Lake Oswego which is a very exclusive, private waterway. The regulations by that private corporation, in addition to banning access to the public at large, ban all boats over 3500 lbs and over 23ft. They do not single out just one type of boat. Not only are we concerned about the attempts to treat our public river like a private lake for the benefit of a few who are able to buy property there, but if they want to try to limit boat weight and size like Lake Oswego, they would need to objectively apply those restrictions to all boats. Is that the plan, to ban all boats on the upper Willamette River over 4000 lbs, keeping in mind as well that there is a strong likelihood the locks will be opened again and such boat bans would greatly impact both public and commercial navigation on the river?

It is important that other agencies like the DSL can be consulted and included on decisions that might overlap in their areas of authority but that already happens.

The mission of the Oregon State Marine Board is to "serve Oregon's recreational boating public through education, enforcement, access, and environmental stewardship for a safe and enjoyable experience." HB 2695 would change the mission of this public agency which is concerning to us and given that recreational boaters throughout Oregon fund the Marine Board through boat registrations, we believe that would raise issues of if the agency should then be funded through other means if the board will no longer be made up of and be serving those recreational boaters.

This attempt to remake the Marine Board came out of unfair accusations that were made that the Marine Board wasn't doing its job, after an OSMB hearing in 2019 when some of us were invited to testify. A request was made to ban all tow boats over 3500 with a lawyer for Willamette Riverkeeper testifying that there might be some "potential" impacts from boat wakes.

Marine Board members rightfully asked if they had done studies to look into those questions and the lawyer said they had not. Given that many experts including those from OSU had been very clear that there would need to be long term studies done to understand the many “different agents affecting” the river, we believe the Marine Board members absolutely did their job in not taking steps to arbitrarily restrict public access to our waterways.

We would be supportive of further discussions about the best way to guarantee transparency and fair representation on the Oregon State Marine Board. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to be a part of those discussions if they do occur.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Paige Stoyer

Mom, Co-founder Willamette River Community Coalition, Photography educator and Director of annual photography exhibition “Our Diversity is Our Strength”