

HB 2695

Dear Chair Witt and members of the committee:

I would like to testify in opposition to bill 2695. I have great concerns that the bill will not create a more fair and transparent process, and likely change the Marine Board's mission statement with less input from our general public.

We have had years of various groups and people advocating for changes to the Willamette River based on private homeowners needs, prioritization of an activity over another, and a general disconnect between motorized and non-motorized boats due to a lack of education and enforcement. However, the proposed change to the board, whose mandate is to support all of Oregon waterways, seems to be based on these specific issues supporting only one waterway in Portland.

The proposed makeup will further politicize the board, dividing the board into battling interest groups. The budget for the Marine Board is paid mainly by boaters, which due to recent rules and legislation, are severely underrepresented, and then would be even more so with this bill. There seems to be a great disparity for the budget expectation on boating and the reduction of access and ban of activities for motorized boats.

We need to consider how to support the audiences on the river: which are the public, businesses and the river itself. In the public audience we have motorized and non-motorized sports. Our board should be designed to create a safe environment, and the focus should be on supporting the broader public of users, including a towed boat sports user or organization, as well as a non-motorized paddler or sailor as recommended. I'd recommend there are qualifications for any seats serving for the general public, and ideally be someone that supports all user groups for the sake of equity.

Agencies like the DSL should be consulted in their areas of authority, but that already happens during the board process. During recent rulemaking it was made clear to those of us on the rule committee that the DSL and Fish and Wildlife, among others were consulted and asked if they had any concerns they wanted addressed. However those agencies did not have any concerns about boats or boat wakes.

Also, many rules and legislation are based on personal preference and not rooted in research (vs scientific assumption or opinion), but we can heed the recommendations of law enforcement, which unfortunately their previous testimonies in opposition to specific rules were ignored. I see that they do not have a proposed seat on the board via this bill despite their great participation in the safety, and one of the main strategies of our river.

Thank you for your time,
Erin Patterson