

Dear Committee on Rules Senators,

I am submitting testimony to oppose SB 857. As a boater, river user and homeowner on the Willamette, I'm concerned with the direction our State is trying to take to restrict access to our public waterway.

Willamette River enthusiasts have long enjoyed various forms of towed sports, and something my family certainly enjoys along with paddling and swimming. During this time where, as a state we've struggled with many natural disasters and a nationwide pandemic, it seems ill fitting to focus policy on taking away equity and enjoyment on our river. At the very least, bills should be grounded in solid research and favor the general public, not select waterfront homeowners and paddlers looking to eliminate motorized boating for their own personal gain.

Real studies should be conducted to determine the best ways to keep the river safe and healthy. I personally find it concerning that the Newberg Pool is already one of the most regulated bodies of water in Oregon, and it begs the question how special interest groups have been able to create a false narrative that tries to hold towed sports accountable for things like erosion, which has many causes. Yet currently, wake surfing is only allowed in two small zones with no adjacent homes, but somehow that is still too much for a vocal few.

This bill will make our waterways less safe and negatively impact Oregon families and small businesses. Setting an arbitrary boat weight limit that effects two out of three boats on the upper being active is simply unjust. The House already extensively debated this bill and did not move forward. I respectfully urge you to do the same. Oregon needs our senators focused on COVID, economic recovery and getting our kids back in school. Please do not waste time on this unnecessary legislation.

Thank you for your consideration,
Erin Patterson