

Submitter: Jodi Schoenen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB3006

I am writing to request an exception to HB 3006 for youth rowers in Oregon that is in line with the exception offered by the U.S. Coast Guard. "33 CFR § 175.17 - Exemptions. CFR § 175.17 Exemptions. (a) Canoes and kayaks 16 feet or more in length are exempted from the requirements for carriage of the additional throwable PFD required under § 175.15(b). (b) Racing shells, rowing sculls, racing canoes, and racing kayaks are exempted from the requirements for carriage of any PFD required under § 175.15."

As a parent of two youth rowers, the safety of youth on the water is exceedingly important to me.

PFDs on the bodies of our young rowers DO NOT increase their safety, but in fact, can cause more injury. Sculling and sweeping are sports in which oars tips are brought very close to the bodies of the athletes while they slide on moving seats on rails with their feet tied into shoes attached to the boat. They wear unisuits that are fitted snugly to their body to avoid entanglement as this can result in boat ejection and injury.

The sport includes many precautions to ensure the safety of young rowers as they practice and compete. Youth rowers' swimming abilities are assessed, coaches follow boats closely in safety launches and during practices boats are clustered together.

PFDs would create a significant safety risk to rowers and would increase the likelihood of injury with no real benefit to the young athletes. PFDs would essentially handicap Oregon rowers as their peers all row under the Coast Guard exception.

As parents, we care deeply about our children's safety. We oppose this bill and request exception for youth rowers. Thank you for considering my testimony.