

January 31, 2023

Rep. Jason Kropf, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
Oregon House of Representatives

Chair Kropf, and members of the Committee,

My name is Brittny Flynn. I am a third-year medical student at OHSU and a former competitive swimmer. I am writing to express my strongest possible support for HB 3006 on my own behalf. This bill would save lives by increasing the age requirement for personal flotation device use, and expand the requirement for use beyond just watercraft to include innertubes, pool toys and other objects used to float on natural water on public lands.

Between 2006, and 2020, according to the Oregon Bureau of Vital Statistics and the US Centers for Disease Control, 192 Oregon children and adolescents drowned in our state. That makes drowning the 2nd leading cause of death for children 0-4 years, and the 4th single leading cause of death for those 5-18 years.

The impact of drowning in our state remains vastly under-recognized, and it is worse here than anywhere else on the West Coast. Overall, Oregon children drown at a 26% higher rate compared to the US overall rate, 72% greater than children in California, and 42% greater than Washington. Among older children aged 5-18 years, Oregon kids drown at a 68% higher rate than the national rate, 42% greater than the same aged youth in Washington, and almost 3 times more often than kids in California!

I began swimming competitively at a very young age. Some weeks it felt like I spent more time inside of the water than I did out of it. Needless to say, I am usually more comfortable in the water than on land. However, I quickly learned the differences between the water in a pool and the water that exists within nature. The open waters are not as forgiving as still pool water and in many cases, the skill of swimming itself is not enough to fight through currents and undertows. In my studies as a medical student, I have learned about the development of humans and maturation over time. It is well documented that decision making and impulsivity does not reach its full capacity until early adulthood, placing adolescents and early teens at greater risk for injuries and even death in high risk situations. It is our responsibility to protect our youth and this bill would save lives by decreasing drowning rates in a high-risk population.

HB 3006 will help protect Oregon's children and teens by requiring PFD use for older youth, and when children are floating on products that are currently expected from Oregon regulation.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brittny Flynn', written in a cursive style.

Brittny Flynn

