

Testimony in favor of HB 3006, Life vests

HJUD 2/1/22

Lisa Reynolds

[HB 3006](#)

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Wallan and Andersen, members of the House Committee on Judiciary, thank you for your time today.

For the record, my name is Lisa Reynolds. I am state representative for HD 34 in Washington County.

And, I am a pediatrician - you might say child health and safety is my day job, but it also informs all of the work I do here in the legislature. That is why I'm here in support of HB 3006.

I am honored to bring forward a lifesaving improvement in our quest to reduce child drowning in Oregon. This concept was brought to me by Dr Ben Hoffman and the students and residents under his instruction at the OHSU School of Medicine. I'll let Dr Hoffman introduce himself and his crew, but I do want to mention that next year, Dr Hoffman will be the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics - our professional organization that represents almost 70,000 pediatricians nationwide. This is good for Oregon and good for child safety.

Look, our glorious rivers bring out Oregonians eager for recreation and - in the summer - relief from the heat. Unfortunately, we also know that these waters create a risk of drowning deaths, especially for our youngest Oregonians. Oregon's child drowning rates are higher than the national average and higher than our neighbors, WA and CA.

So, this bill does two simple things:

It raises the age for which a young person needs to wear a life vest on a boat to those younger than 16.

And it expands the water “vehicles,” if you will, for which a youth under age 16 must wear a life vest. These “vehicles” would now include inner tubes, buoyant foam including rafts, and other floating items. These rules would only apply when a child is *outside* of a designated swimming area.

I also want to address a concern that my office has been made well aware of: members of the competitive rowing and other water sport communities have voiced opposition to the idea that personal flotation devices would be required in their sports. Under current Marine Board administrative rules, specifically OAR 250-010-0154, racing shells, rowing sculls, racing canoes and racing kayaks are exempted from the requirements for carriage of any PFD. In this bill, under Section 1, subsection 5, the Marine Board would still have the power to make exemptions to the personal flotation device rule as they deem necessary, and the carriage exemption could be extended by the Marine Board to include an exemption to wearing PFDs for these sport activities that take place in controlled environments.

I want to make abundantly clear on the record that the legislative intent here is not to force a change to current administrative rules or limit the Marine Board’s authority to make exemptions for PFDs as they see fit. Any determination on activities which could be exempted would remain at the judgment of the Marine Board. We are exploring the possibility of a slight amendment to make the Marine Board’s authority clear.

I will let the experts and advocates brief you further.

Please join me in preventing drowning deaths by co-sponsoring and passing HB 3006.

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