

Submitter: Stephanie Noll
On Behalf Of: Oregon Trails Coalition
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB754

February 14th, 2023

Dear Chairs Prozanski and Thatcher and Members of the Committee:

I'm submitting this testimony in support of SB 754 relating to release of liability for recreation outfitters on behalf of the Oregon Trails Coalition.

The Oregon Trails Coalition is a coalition of broad-based, statewide partners dedicated to the preservation, development, and stewardship of a statewide network of sustainable trails that provide access to outdoor recreation and active transportation for all.

Our advisory council includes representatives from more than twenty-five federal, state, and local agencies, trail user groups, outdoor industry and tourism partners, conservation advocates, and volunteer organizations. We represent walkers, bikers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, adaptive equipment users, skiers, snowmobilers, and motorized trail enthusiasts.

Access to nature and outdoor recreation is deeply valued by Oregonians. For instance, we know from the most recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) that 74% of Oregonians report using local trails and more than half of Oregonians travel outside of their communities to access trails. We also know that since that data was collected interest in outdoor recreation exploded in our state, and many of our parks, trails and natural areas have received unprecedented visitation.

We have heard clearly from private land owners that would like to allow the public to access trails on their private lands that Oregon's current liability laws limit their willingness to do so. Likewise, guides and outfitters in our community whose services increase the knowledge, skills, and safety of people recreating outdoors, are facing the risk of being shut down by rising liability insurance costs and frivolous lawsuits.

Please forward SB 754 to better balance personal responsibility and business accountability in Oregon and put our state's laws in step with our neighboring states in support access to outdoor recreation.

Thank you for your leadership,

Stephanie Noll,
Coalition Director,
Oregon Trails Coalition